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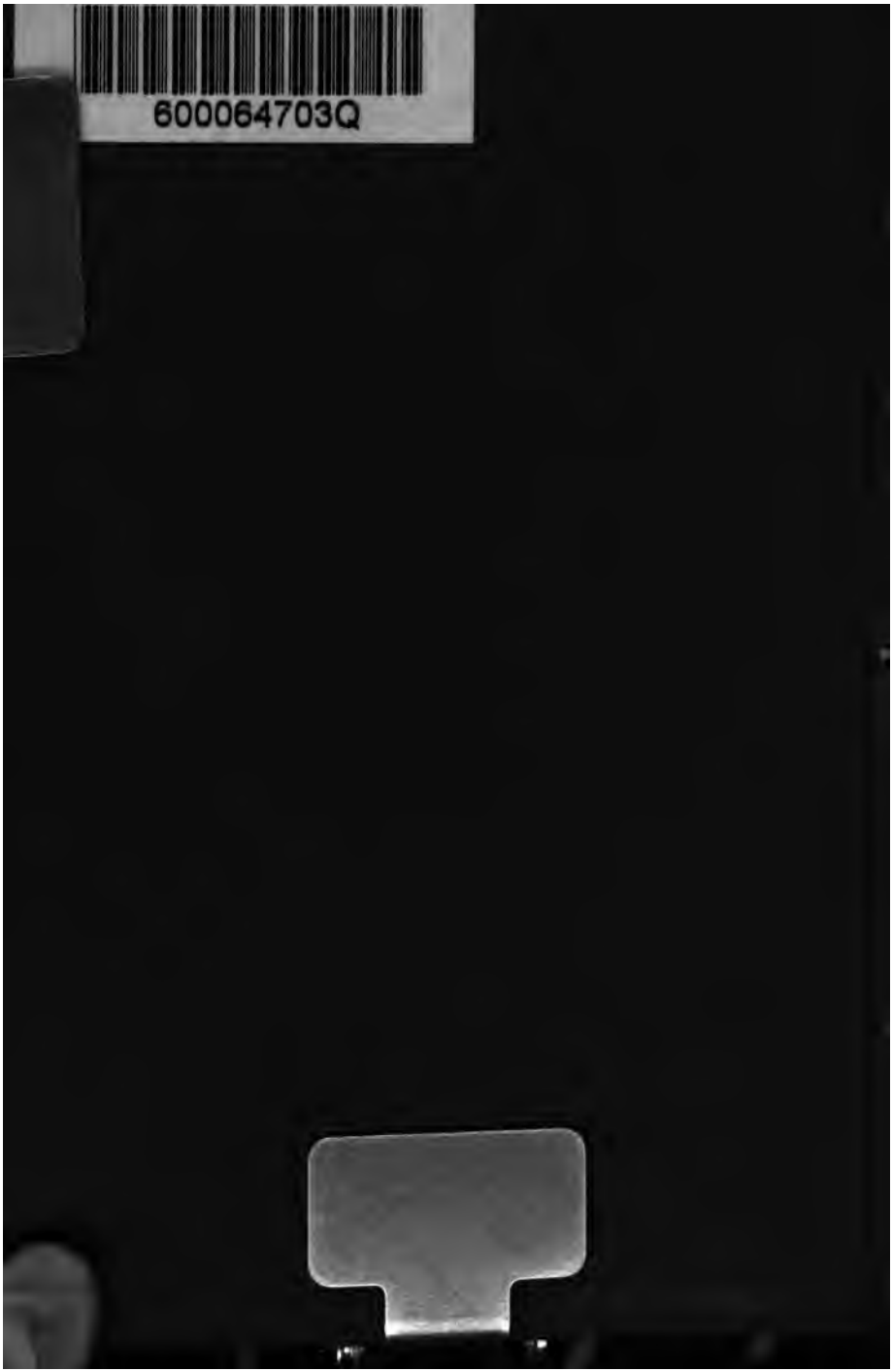
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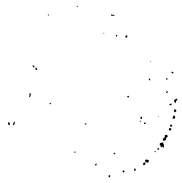

MARQUIS AND MERCHANT.

BY

MORTIMER COLLINS.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

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MARQUIS AND MERCHANT.

CHAPTER I.

IN WHICH ADRIAN THINKS OF AMY.

IT occurred to Lord Waynflete that it would be just as well to put himself beyond the reach of the fascinating Marigold. A second interview on that moonlit terrace was too alarming. So he invented an engagement which did not exist, and took rather abrupt leave of his friend, Hugh Delamere, early next day. Marigold did not appear till luncheon—and before that, Adrian had left. When she entered the room, and cast a glance of unconscious in-

quiry round the table, Charlie Delamere (wickedest of young rascals) exclaimed,

"O, you've lost your new sweetheart, yaller gal. He's off to elope with somebody else."

Marigold looked fiercely indignant, and Hugh Delamere gave his brother a monitory punch on the head.

What had Agnes Delamere done all that night—since she left Lord Waynflete so abruptly? Utterly sleepless, the weary hours had oppressed her with a terrible sense of shame. There was not an iota of harm in this child, but she had been mismanaged; and this same mismanagement of beautiful and spirited young girls is the real reason why some of them grow "fast," and "loud"—mere "girls of the period"—while others of a better type become disgusted with their sexual position, and long to prove themselves the equals of men in the stern

rivalry of life. Agnes Delamere inherited in a modified form the vigorous qualities which had made her father what he was; he had quickened the civilization of a semi-barbarous capital, and had taught an autocrat that a merchant might be princelier than he; but he could not recognise in his own daughter the feminine presentment of himself. The very points in which she closely reflected his own character, appeared to him (to quote Mrs. Malaprop's immortal language) not to become a young woman. Yet Marigold, if she had been left free and fetterless, would have made a charming creature. As it was, being given over to the care of the primmest and most rigorous of duennas, and being tied down to marry a cousin whose good qualities she could not appreciate, while his intellectual inferiority was only too obvious, she recalcitrated. And when she saw Lord Waynflete, a man

to some extent fulfilling that ideal which she (like all girls) had formed, she could not refrain from betraying herself. All well-conducted young persons will agree with me that it was very shocking; but this poor child, passionate-hearted as a rose of June, could not help herself, could not control her sudden wild impulses. The unutterable regret, the infinite remorse, the scathing shame which she endured throughout that sleepless night, were sufficient penalty. She had not sufficient physical force to come down to breakfast—and, when at luncheon she perceived Lord Waynflete's absence, she was greatly troubled.

Meanwhile, where was Adrian? He had taken very early leave of his friend Hugh, ordered his horse, and ridden across the border of Gloucestershire into Wiltshire. As he rode he was dreaming of Amy. Somehow or other, Marigold's sudden and unexpect-

ed attack upon him had caused him to think more intensely of the little governess. What lucky laws of compensation there are in human nature! A woman annoys you—and your imagination flies far away to the woman who is incapable of annoyance—whose grace and charm are ineffable, whose every motion is a delight. It is the same in other matters of a lower class. Often have I drunk infamous wine at an idiot's dinner-table, and found solace in the thought that within an hour or so I should be able to apologize to my palate with a glass of good champagne at home. The rascalities of nature and of human nature have their uses; without the biting east wind, who could enjoy sunshine and the south?

It was a sharp frost. Adrian rode through some wild forest country, which in summer must have been full to the brim of voluptuous beauty, but now was desolate beyond

description. All the way, his thoughts were with Amy. An old boyish knack of verse-making revived, and he found himself rhyming unconsciously in the saddle. Reaching by-and-by a wayside inn that looked habitable, he dismounted, obtained a private room, called for pen and ink, and began to scribble in *terza rima*—a most difficult delicate delicious rhythm. Its complex ease is like the musical mastery of the nightingale. Thus wrote Adrian:

SUMMER.

AMY the beautiful leaned from the ledge
Of an oriel snowy with clematis-bloom:
The south wind sighed through the river sedge.

Far off, the old sea's resonant boom
Rolled without cease under moon and stars—
Music weird of the midnight gloom.

The Giant of Night wore ruby Mars
As a gem on his finger. Hesper shone
Like a beacon over the mountain scaurs.

One amethyst gleam of the sunset gone
Touched the maiden's chesnut hair:
A coronal Summer had set thereon.

The wind's low whisper everywhere
Ran through the leaves with a rustle of life,
As I watched my Amy unaware;

As rose in my heart the deep love-strife
For that sweet girl blossom in clematis-snow,
To woo her and win her, a darling wife.

She passed from my sight. To the sea below,
Where, under the stars, it coiled and curled
In endless ebb and tremulous flow,

The restless pulse of a sleeping world,
I went, in the clutch of a sweet unrest,
And watched the banners of Night unfurled,

And the nebulæ widen over the west.
With me went odour of clematis-musk,
And a vision of beauty Saxon-tressed

Haunted the depths of the mystic dusk;
And a soft shy glance of a lustrous eye
Dwelt in my heart, as a gem in the husk

Of worthless earth. O musical sigh
Of the summer south wind, breathe thou sweet
On Amy, wandering under the sky:

And strew fresh blossoms at Amy's feet,
When deep in the moss the wind-flowers lie,
And afar in the woodland glades we meet.

Verily we are a fiction-loving race. Here is that matter-of-fact young gentleman, Adrian Lord Waynflete, rhyming about summer in

the bitter heart of winter, and imagining his lady-love in a position wherein he had never encountered her. Well, he lighted a cigar, and pondered awhile . . . and then began again.

WINTER.

Ring merrily out cathedral bells
O'er wild wide wolds o'erblown with snow
Where the tyrant Spirit of Winter dwells.

But hotter than Summer my blood's free flow:
For the rich girl-blossom is plucked, is mine—
Mine through the valleys of earth to go.

O, now may I gaze in her deep gray eyne!
For Amy is mine, my own, my bride:
Her absolute beauty, her truth divine,—

Are they not mine? O moorlands wide,
Where the east wind, eddying fierce and swift,
Hurries the snow-storm's turbulent tide,

Piling it high in a perilous drift,—
Are ye not beautiful? Will there be aught
Sweeter when maidenly Spring shall lift

Her delicate foot in the woodlands, fraught
With colour and odour? Will there be
Sweeter musical cadence caught

By the wanderer's ear in the forest free,
When vernal rivulets ripple delight
By moss-grown boles of the old elm-tree

To the yellow star-clusters of primrose bright?
O whence this magical golden haze,
This glamour that gladdens the snow-storm's flight,

This incense burning through wintry days
In my happy heart's strong altar-flame,
Sweeter than breath of a million Mays?

Only make answer with Amy's name—
Amy the beautiful. Verily this
Is the source whence the mystical glamour came—

A fairy fount in the clematis,
Whose icy waters, murmuring low,
None ever have known, none ever may kiss

But one—but I! whose amorous flow
On my long earth-travel I shall not miss
Till Death through the temple of Love shall go.

"This *is* a poem! This *is* a copy of verses!" as Oliver Goldsmith writes. Lord Waynflete thought so, we may be sure. Everybody tries to be a poet once in his life, just as everybody longs to be a Trappist at one period, a hermit at another.

Adrian, however, having a good fund of common sense at the basis of his character, was rather disgusted with himself for being suddenly stricken with the poetical mania.

He thought he would punish himself by turning the rubbish into Latin elegiacs. He had for a while when at Oxford been addicted to making experiments in Latinity. You know the sort of man who

> ". . . circa nemus uvidique
> Isidis ripas operosa parvus
> Carmina fingit."

For a very short time Lord Waynflete had been smitten with a fancy for this classic recreation—which, like a taste for old china or heraldry, may be tolerated if it does not become chronic. Of this there was no fear in Lord Waynflete's case. He made a false quantity in his second line. He was disgusted; the fire was very hot, and the chair he sat in very easy. His ride in the cold had slightly tired him. He fell asleep over his perplexed pentameter.

When he awoke he was no longer alone. A stranger was sitting on the other side of the fire-place, smoking a short meerschaum.

Adrian, who had of course been dreaming strange dreams, wherein Amy and Marigold were curiously intermingled, felt hardly certain that he was now awake. The short afternoon had passed into twilight; the fire of large logs gave a fitful light, brightening at intervals the old oak furniture of the room, and giving him only faint glimpses of his unexpected companion's face. That companion was in a brown study, puffing his pipe strenuously, and gloomily gazing into the fire. Adrian gradually made him out to be a man of thirty or a trifle more, under six feet in height, with broad shoulders, brawny limbs, jet black hair grown very short, face closely shaven, chin blue-black where the beard was sternly repressed. He wore a brown velvet coat, cord breeches, leather gaiters; as he pondered, his short wide hand clutched at his knee, and Adrian saw strong sinews at work beneath the skin.

It was Herakles—in modern costume.

The way in which the old Greek gods and goddesses reproduce themselves is a proof of the natural growth of Hellenic Paganism. I have met in the flesh every dweller on Olympus. How it happened, is a matter which possibly Professor Max Müller could explain; but this I know, that in Homer I find most of the higher type of men and women, and a good many of the lower ones. Of course I find more in Shakespeare than in Homer; Shakespeare came later, and was of a higher race; and, as Coleridge observes, you may see him, in *Troïlus and Cressida*, sending the old Greek heroes to school again. Yet, after all, the great types of men and women are in Homer. Helen is there, and Andromache, and Penelopeia, and Nausikaa. After those women, we must not boast too much of our dear Stratford poet's Desdemona and Ophelia, Rosa-

lind and Miranda. As to the male characters, comparison were absurd; it is even now hard to say which interests men most, Odysseus or Hamlet.

Adrian made a movèment. His companion awoke from his meditative mood, and at once made courteous apology. He had reached the little inn after some wild fowl shooting, wet and cold. There was no room with a good fire except that which Adrian occupied. To this the landlady had brought him, with intent to ask its occupant's toleration: but Lord Waynflete was comfortably asleep, so the new comer dismissed the hostess, and postponed his apology.

"I am very glad to have your company," said Adrian, "I assure you. In these little country inns it is absurd to talk about private rooms. I think the best thing we can do is to dine together."

"I shall be very glad," said the stranger.

"I have picked up a few teal and a couple of woodcocks this afternoon: they will perhaps help to furnish a meal."

"Excellent," said Adrian. "Eggs and bacon is the popular entertainment in these parts, I believe. Your contribution will be a great improvement."

However, the worthy hostess rose above the normal level of eggs and bacon. Fortunate folk who live beyond the grasping reticulation of the great railway sagene may get choice materials for dinner more cheaply than even in London itself: there was a great deer-park near this little hostelry, and the chief element of the dinner was a venison pasty such as Robin Hood and Maid Marian might have enjoyed together. Followed by a brace of teal and another of woodcock, this was not an unsatisfactory dinner, surely: moreover, though there were no civilized wines to be had, there was some port which

had dwelt in the cellar for a good many years, and had thereby become drinkable.

After all, port wine is a great fact, whether or not it is made chiefly of elderberries, as Mr. Robert Lytton alleges. In these days between Gladstone Claret and Château Yquem, we English are apt to forget what we owe to port. Avaunt, ye waters of Lethe! Port made Pitt a statesman, Fox an orator, Nelson

"The flower of all the admirals that ever trod the sea,"

Wellington the world's greatest captain, Byron England's second poet. Port shut Napoleon up in St. Helena. Port gave us our National Debt and our National Gallery. Port made D'Orsay elegant, and Luttrell epigrammatic. Without port could England have produced "the first gentleman of Europe?"

"A noble nasty course he ran,
Superbly filthy and fastidious;
He was the world's first gentleman,
And made the appellation hideous."

Imagine a Tory without port—or, for that matter, a Whig either. The old parties are extinct: it is the era of claret and hock—of Liberals and Conservatives. In these days of weak wines we have come down to shilling magazines: the founders of the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly* drank port, depend on it. I fear the decay of literature began when the Poet Laureate entered the Cock tavern and exclaimed—

> "O plump head-waiter at The Cock,
> To which I most resort,
> How goes the time? 'Tis five o'clock,
> Go fetch a pint of port."

A *pint* of port! Surely when a poet could give such a puny order, the decadence had commenced. Bah! Give me the generous fluid in a magnum of a comet year, and let me watch the violet scintillate and the bees-wing float in an ample goblet of the thinnest claret glass that Salviati's deftest Venetian artist can blow for me. Nor will I be sworn to refuse the second bottle.

Utter strangers to each other, Lord Waynflete and his comrade dined together, chatted pleasantly through their meal, enjoyed together the generous wine. Adrian found his new acquaintance fresh and suggestive, and was glad to forget in his company the ideas which had pre-occupied his mind. By-and-by, when the wood fire grew ruddier, its oaken core being an intense centre of flame—when the third bottle of port was opened and the smoke was curling above their heads in fragrant wreaths—the Heraklide showed symptoms of becoming confidential. Just after dinner-hour is the very time for confidences: and an absolute stranger always tempts one to their betrayal. To some men a secret is so great a burden that they *must* reveal it: and to whom can such revelation be so appropriately made as to the stranger whom they have never seen be-

4 6

fore, whom also they expect never to see again?

"We have had a snug little dinner together," he said, "and I have very much enjoyed your company. And now, if it won't be a great bore, I should like to tell you my story. I have been just ten years in England, and I never felt inclined to tell anybody before."

"You are not an Englishman, then?" said Adrian, with some surprise.

"No indeed: I hail from the Hub of the Universe."

"From where?"

"Boston, Massachusetts. We Yankees think it the centre of the world. That's one reason why I'm here. I was told from my babyhood, by every one of my highly respectable relations, that Boston was the finest city on the face of this planet. I tried very hard to believe it, but couldn't. In-

stead of being free, I found myself shut in at every point. I happened to be an orphan, with a lot of money coming to me, and a multitude of uncles and aunts. These respectable and intelligent people held it their duty to make me an orthodox Bostonian in religion and politics. I was to go to the proper church and vote the proper ticket. If I ventured on an idea of my own, it was blasphemous. Now I've got some ideas of my own——"

"You look as if you had," interrupted Adrian.

"I have. My kind friends tell me I'm a Pagan. The fact is this: You see what I'm made of," he said, stretching his massive limbs—"well, I believe I was intended to use my muscles. I've no brain worth mentioning. I hate books. I can't make anything of either the Bible or Shakespeare—so of course my religious uncles think me

wicked, and my literary uncles vote me an ass. The world is book enough for me. I wanted to get away into the backwoods or the prairies—hew down timber, hunt wild animals, sleep under the sky, tell the time by the sun or the stars, have the grass for my bed and the river for my bath. That shocked Boston. I tell you, sir, I was preached to death. I believe they would have driven me mad if it had not been for a young Englishman I met. He is dead now, poor fellow! He was a year or two older than I, and was travelling in the States just after I came of age. We met by accident, got friendly, and I told him my troubles. He smoked a pipe over it, and then he said, 'How's your money invested? Can you get at it?' I told him it was all in State securities, that I could soon sell. 'Sell at once,' he said, 'and come to England.' 'To England!' I exclaimed. 'Why, it's a little island

crowded with people, where nobody dare call his soul his own.' 'Is it?' says he: 'I've travelled half over the world, and I know that England's the only place where people let you alone.'"

"So you took his advice," said Adrian.

"Yes. One fine morning, having quietly realized most of my money, I shipped off to New York. He was returning to England, so we started together; but he died on his way home. Ah, he was a good friend to me, and gave me the best advice in the world. He died of consumption; never went below till the last day; but he knew it was coming, and used to talk of the other world as if he could see right through the doorway and windows of it. That was no good to me, you know; I find this world as much as I can understand."

"And you have remained in England ever since?" remarked Adrian.

"Yes. It suits me. Nobody knows me. I'm called John Brown, which isn't my name. When I got to London I walked straight to the Bank of England—I knew that would be safe—and asked them to take care of my money. They looked at me suspiciously, at first; but I told them I was a young American, come to see the old country, and didn't want to throw my money away all at once, and so they took care of it for me. I brought away about a hundred thousand dollars; it wasn't the whole, but I left the rest to console my uncles and aunts."

"Well," said Lord Waynflete, "yours is a curious history. And do you get the kind of life you like in England?"

"Yes, I get as much hunting and fishing and shooting as I want. My poor friend put me up to the plan. He told me to look in the *Times* for advertisements—and I

should be sure to see something that would tempt me. This autumn I rented a little shooting box about a dozen miles from here, with some very fair trout fishing and wild fowl shooting. The cottage is a tumble-down place with four rooms, and some old ramshackle furniture, and a dreadfully deaf old man—I should think he was a hundred —to look after it. But I don't sleep there more than once a week, on an average. Sometimes I camp out; sometimes I sleep at one of the inns in the villages or by the roadside. I like to meet the country folk, and hear them talk—in their taprooms, or on the benches under the elm-trees outside. I like to be on equal terms with them. The other day they brought a big fellow across the Berkshire border to 'rossle' with me, as they call it. I never saw a man more surprised than he was when he found himself on his back."

"And what do you think of the English generally?" asked Adrian.

"Why, I think Americans are Englishmen spoilt. There's something in the air, or the food, or the government that takes the nature out of us. Now I'm in England I'm at home. You can't breathe in that stuck-up village of Boston."

"You won't return, then, I suppose."

"No, indeed. I'll live and die in England, if I can get my own way. My affectionate uncles and aunts made earnest inquiries after me for several years; but I had been too cunning for them, and they gave it up some time ago, and have been quarrelling ever since, I expect, as to how to divide the fifty thousand dollars I left behind. You see, England was the last place they expected me to go to. Knowing my habits and ideas, they fancied that I should rush off to some wild country; if any-

body had told them that I went straight to London, and put my money in the Bank of England, they would have thought it a hoax."

"Have you made many acquaintances in England?" asked Adrian.

"Casual acquaintances plenty," he replied. "Now and then, where I have taken a shooting box, some neighbouring squire or parson has tried to be friendly, especially if he had any daughters. I have remarked one thing: the daughters of your country squires often become old maids, and devote themselves to religious recreation. I suppose it is because the eldest son takes all the money. It is a great pity. Those patrician girls ought to marry. O, if you could only send them to America to improve our breed!"

"But I thought your girls were delightful," said Adrian. "My friend Spence of

Liverpool says you should go to the States for three things—terrapin soup, canvas-back ducks and the girls of Baltimore."

"Baltimore is a nice village," he replied, "where they understand eating pretty well. But the turtle of Leadenhall Street beats our terrapin; and a grouse or a woodcock is worth a score of canvas-backs; and a Baltimore lass runs up like a pumpkin plant, and dies out before she's thirty. Now, I'll tell you where you beat us: the ladies of England *last*. I've met a spinster of forty-five that was as lithe and lissom as at twenty—and twice as clever. Do you know, it wasn't till I'd had some acquaintance with your ladies that I understood your Church of England's making a law that a man mustn't marry his grandmother. There's no country but England where a fellow would be likely to want to do it."

"You flatter us too much, I think," said

Adrian. "And if you are such an admirer of English women, why don't you marry one? You are the sort of man that ought to have sons."

"I don't think so. Sons of mine, if like me, would find no work in the world, and would sink into mere day-labourers. You have all gone mad about brain. I don't believe in brain. I have tried to read your poets and philosophers, and they seem to me to talk dreadful nonsense. Sons of mine, if you want to conquer a country or build a city, would be of some use: but this is a time of talk, talk, talk, of write, write, write,—and that wouldn't suit them."

It occurred to Adrian that if they resembled their father, "talk, talk, talk" might possibly be their vocation. But he merely said—

"Well, I am very glad to have met you. You have given me some fresh ideas. And

now, will you come and see me at my father's place? We won't try to marry you to anybody. And you shall have as much hunting, and shooting, and fishing as you like—and sleep out of doors whenever you please."

John Brown, Heraklides, accepted conditionally.

CHAPTER II.

CHRISTMAS AT MOWBRAY MANSION.

AT Mowbray Mansion the winter was gay. The Squire filled his house with the finest folk from Manchester, male and female. The grave merchants of Sir Jacob Jones's type brought with them their wives, maroon and amber matrons, unparalleled for size and silk; brought also their sons, Jacob the younger and his humble imitators; brought furthermore their charming daughters, some scraggy and angular, but the majority plump and portly, destined to develop into the likeness of their stately mammas. Mowbray, who was rapidly bringing the place into what he deemed perfec-

tion, delighted in exhibiting it to his friends. They came in multitudes; they brought equipage and stud and servants. Flanagan of the Mowbray Hotel made money so fast that he couldn't keep sober. On a dark night the windows of the great house were all one blaze; it seemed to light up the gloomy leafless woods of Ashridge Manor; wayfarers miles away upon the frosty road caught the great glow, and wondered what it meant.

Little Amy Gray was at this time quite effaced, but was no less happy on that account. She taught little Ethel all the morning, and they dined together in their own apartment, and then they walked out together in the gardens and woods. It was a lonely life for Amy, but she was sound both in mind and body, and enjoyed it very much. No longer was it requisite for her to appear at the dinner-table, where indeed

charming young ladies were only too abundant; but there were times when some of those young ladies gushed forth a wish to Mr. Mowbray that his "dear little daughter" would come into the drawing-room; and then Amy had to bring Ethel up, and neither of them liked it at all. Amy felt herself such a small creature among those magnificent women, who filled even those great rooms with their trains, and whose low dresses revealed their superb forms in a way that was entirely new to the little governess. She shrank into a corner, and was glad to be left alone. But they *would* patronise her, would ask her all manner of questions which she knew to be impertinent, although not unkindly meant. How old was she? Where was she educated? Did she like being a governess? Inquiries like these were made by feminine Manchester, quite with the best intentions.

We know where such intentions are used by the local Board of Works. There are few things in which English people blunder more helplessly than in the treatment of their supposed superiors and inferiors. They are apt to be too deferential to the former, too patronizing to the latter. The right rule is simple enough: treat every stranger as your equal, until you find out some difference between you that requires recognition. Let me suppose you to be an English gentleman, of ordinary culture. You meet an unknown person in your travels. There is no introduction; you talk easily and pleasantly; you part without formality, even as you met. But suppose that your stranger before parting turns out to be the Prince of Wales, need you be embarrassed? Assuredly not. H.R.H. was doubtless glad to be taken on his merits, and talked to as an equal, for once in his life. And suppose, on the other

hand, when you reach the house of a friend, the interesting stranger should turn out to be his valet. Need you then be embarrassed? I fancy not. You and your host, if made of the right stuff, will be glad to recognise that the servitor is, as men say, "superior to his position." Shake his hand, my good friend, and tell him you are glad to see him again. As to people's being superior to their position, why, there's much nonsense in it. Setting aside the men whose vocation demands from them the exercise of high intellect, there is little difference between us. A Chancellor of the Exchequer is a cashier, and a Lord Great Chamberlain a *valet de chambre*: they are the same animalcules magnified many times. Stewards have become kings, and butlers great nobles.

Amy's evenings in the saloon were, however, not numerous. She was only remembered now and then. She did not know

that Edward Mowbray's eye always searched for her, and always brightened when she was found. She did not notice that he would glance up from his letters at breakfast, just to catch a glimpse of her fair fresh face and innocent calm eyes and quiet kissable mouth. He seldom spoke to her now; Manchester had come to visit him, and he was afraid of nothing but Manchester. He must not let those magnificent Manchester maidens suppose that he even noticed the existence of his governess. But he began to learn, from the annoyance which this self-restraint cost him, that he liked that same governess very much indeed. He began to think that he should like to marry her, when Manchester wasn't looking, and to pass with her a long honeymoon in some remote enchanted island, so that on their return Manchester might have forgotten him.

Only a perfectly original man is independent. Other men, however resolute, are guided by the opinions of the large body of men who are just like themselves.

Christmas Day arrived at Mowbray Mansion. It came on a Saturday. The house was full. Everybody went to church. Have I said that the church was in Lord Wraysbury's park, just a bow shot from the lodge gates? This annoyed Mowbray excessively, and he seriously thought of building a rival church in his own park; or, better still, of turning Roman Catholic or Nonconformist, and erecting a cathedral or conventicle that could have held half the county. The interior arrangements of the edifice also annoyed him. It was a small cruciform church of the thirteenth century, with tower and spire, a perfect gem: the Waynfletes were lay rectors, and had fitted it up with low oaken seats, all free, and pulpit, lectern rood

screen, of costly porphyry and alabaster, and had induced a great painter to paint above the altar a grand fresco of the five wise and five foolish virgins. Admirably had that last work been done: in those ten lovely maiden faces were five several types of wisdom, five several types of folly. The seats were free; but on the south and north sides of the chancel were the pews of the lay rector and of the vicar—open oak pews like the rest.

The church was charmingly decorated that Christmas Day in the morning. Mrs. Rosvere was an artist in flowers, and had free access to the conservatories of Ashridge Manor, and had a band of willing schoolgirls to help her. Most parishes have some young ladies who like to do this sort of thing, but Ashridge was free from the infliction. The parson's children were young; there was neither lawyer nor doctor; there was

nobody between the two great houses and the shopkeepers. Lord Wraysbury had some wealthy farmers on his estate—men who drove a carriage and pair; but their homesteads were far from Ashridge village, and they had parish churches of their own.

The party from Mowbray Mansion were rather late at church this Christmas morning; the schoolmaster was playing his voluntary, and Rosvere was on his way to the reading-desk. Mowbray, with a magnificent lady on his arm, was moving towards the chancel, into which his large party had frequently overflowed, when he saw something which changed his intention, and caused him to deposit his fair companion in the first seat he could find in the nave. This something was a tall young man, sitting in the rector's pew in an indolent languid way, indecorous, I fear, in a church. It was Adrian, Lord Waynflete, and no other, and

Mowbray regarded him with a look of defiance which Adrian did not return. In truth, he did not see it. He was thinking of Marigold.

But the influx of so large a congregation aroused him from his trance, and he became aware of the great Manchester invasion, and caught a glimpse of the dainty little figure, almost lost in the superfluous skirts of the superior sort, which advanced in the rear. Yes, and Amy saw him, instantly. Coming in last of all—except of course the small army of footmen—and leading her little pupil, she raised her eyes to look at the decorations. And of course she saw the tall fellow in the rector's pew. And, do you know? she blushed. I wonder why.

It was a surprise for both the governess and her master. And it was not the only surprise of that morning's service. For just

as they were enthusiastically chanting that curious mixture of metaphysics and commination, the Athanasian Creed, the door opened, and Terrell, the Bohemian barrister, walked up the aisle, and seated himself behind Mr. Mowbray. The Squire was not easily astonished, but Terrell's advent puzzled him; and I fear that curiosity as to the reason of it prevented him from paying proper attention to Mr. Rosvere's excellent sermon.

"That was a fine young fellow sitting in the chancel," said Terrell, as he and Mowbray got outside the church door together.

"You came down to tell me that, I suppose. That's Lord Waynflete."

"Well, don't be quite so fierce. I've some good news for you."

Mowbray looked at him inquiringly.

"Walls have ears," said Terrell in an oracular tone, "church walls especially. My

news is for your private ear, and I think you will find it interesting. Only late last night I heard it at the Club; and, as I did not care to trust the telegraph, I thought I'd bring it down. Of course I didn't forget that I should encounter a pleasant party and have a good dinner."

"Where would you have dined otherwise?" asked Mowbray, with a smile.

"I hardly know. A man without relations finds Christmas Day the dullest in the year. People invite you: but you don't feel at home among the customary mob of uncles and aunts and cousins, with perhaps a venerable grandmother telling dim tales of old from the chimney-corner. Last Christmas I went down to the Cheshire Cheese, intending to eat a couple of turkey's legs, devilled, and drink a bottle of port, and go home early: but the hospitable landlord found me out, and made me join his own party."

"Well," quoth Mowbray, "there'll be no aunts and cousins to trouble you here. I'm as free of relations as you are. Meanwhile, if your story is not a long one, you can tell it me before lunch."

Mowbray and Terrell had moved forward rather rapidly, as is usually the case when men are absorbed in conversation: and, as the day was cold, the remainder of the party also walked pretty fast. Somehow, Amy and her pupil were the last of the procession; and were overtaken by Lord Waynflete, who held out his hand to the governess, and said, "Good morning, Miss Gray. This is pleasant weather for Christmas."

So it was. And Amy was a pleasant sight, cosily wrapped up, her sweet face reddened partly by the winter wind, partly by Adrian's approach.

"I did not expect to see you here, Lord Waynflete," she said.

"Nor did I expect to be here," said Adrian: "but all our people are abroad, and I don't care to spend Christmas at a friend's house, for strangers seem always in the way at family gatherings: so I thought I might as well look in at the old place for a day or two, and eat my solitary Christmas dinner among the portraits of my ancestors."

"Perhaps they'll come down and talk to you, after dinner," she said, with a laugh.

"Rather an alarming idea. Fancy being kissed under the mistletoe by one's great-grandmother."

Amy wasn't up in the mystery of the mistletoe. They don't hang that sacred parasite in orphan schools. And, though big bunches of it, mingled with red-berried holly, were suspended in the halls of Mowbray Mansion, no one had been bold enough to take one of those stately sumptuous Manchester girls thereunder.

"Well, we must run on, Lord Waynflete," she said, extending her pretty little hand, "or we shall be missed. Good-bye. Shall you be here long?"

"A couple of days, perhaps. Good-bye."

Thus they parted, and Adrian went off to explore his demesne, and to see if he could persuade Métivier to come and dine. His conversation outside the church was harmless enough, as anyone can see. There wasn't a word more, on my honour. I can't answer for looks, you know; I can't write the language of the eyes—if I could, what a popular novelist I should be! One thing is certain, that Amy tripped home ever so much the happier for that brief colloquy. And another thing is certain, that the young ladies of Manchester, who had of course admired Lord Waynflete the moment they beheld him in church, were unanimously and consentaneously shocked by

seeing him talk familiarly to a . . . . governess! There was much conversation about Miss Gray that afternoon between luncheon and dinner. The former had been a simple meal, and people are always hungry, you know, after a sermon; and as it is necessary to prepare oneself for that vast banquet, a Christmas dinner, the young ladies retired to their rooms to lounge in loose habiliments, and gossip, and doze. And in conclave they pulled Amy to pieces, calling her sly, criticizing her looks, wondering what Lord Waynflete could see in her, hoping (with upcast eyes) that nothing unfortunate might happen, questioning whether she was fit to have charge of that dear little girl, Ethel Evelyn Mowbray. But none of these amiable whisperings reached Mr. Mowbray, who had a contempt for gossip, and would never listen to innuendo or suggestion. Besides, this day he was preoccupied with

Terrell's news—which indeed was good news, exciting news, and more than an equivalent for the Bohemian barrister's Christmas dinner.

"Do you know anything of the politics of Rothcastle?" asked Terrell, when they had reached Mowbray's sanctum.

"Nothing, except that it returns to the House one member, a high Tory, old Sir Arthur Halsted, the most confounded obstructive simpleton we've got."

"Yes—he sits for Rothcastle, in Lord Wraysbury's interest. The borough had two members; since 1832 only one; and now its boundaries have been enlarged, and there will be five times as many electors."

"Well, what are you driving at?"

"Just this," replied Terrell. "I learnt last night at the City that old Halsted is dying; gradually but surely. He can't live a week."

"Is this on good authority?"

"The best—his own doctor. Now you see what is to be done. The Marquis is abroad; Lord Waynflete knows and cares very little about politics; you have only to attack the seat to gain it. That would be a greater triumph than railing-in a common."

Mowbray sat in thought for some time, and Terrell, who knew him well, marked in his eye the workings of his ambition.

"I'll do it, by Heaven!" he said, at last.

"I knew you would," says Terrell. "I have ordered a fellow I can trust to watch Sir Arthur's house day and night, and to telegraph here—just one mysterious word—the moment his death occurs. And I propose to ride over to-morrow to Rothcastle, and look up a certain Radical attorney, who is always in election matters, and will make a capital agent. We'll have no Man in the Moon, you know."

"Certainly not," says Mowbray, laughing. "But come, let's go to luncheon. They will be waiting for us."

Let us leave Mowbray Mansion to its brilliant day of festival, and enter the old-fashioned corridors of Ashridge. Lord Waynflete had with some difficulty tempted Métivier from the Hut, where he had intended to eat a very plain dinner, and then to study for an hour or two the mythology of the time—for it must be said with regret that our learned friend was rather a Pagan than otherwise, and believed that Yule was connected with the descent and re-ascent of Helios, and tried very hard to peer into mysteries hidden in the far depths of forgotten religions and perished races.

They dined in Lord Waynflete's private study, and there was none of the heavy festivity of Christmas about the meal. It was just the sort of dinner which everybody

should eat who can afford it—light, various, digestible, artistic, with wines carefully adapted to the meats, and game, and fruits. Wine is to dinner what music is to words.

In the course of their post-cænal talk, Adrian asked his old friend's opinion (of course without mention of names) concerning Marigold's strange conduct. For Métivier was master of all strange lore; had theories of his own about lunacy and diabolic possession; believed that there was something in the legends of ghosts and witches, ay, and even in the modern myths of mesmerism, clairvoyance, spiritualism. Having listened to Adrian's narrative, he said,

"The way in which that young lady is shut up, when she ought to be out and abroad in the world, is quite enough to ripen in her any latent seeds of lunacy. We all have such seeds: I think we all of us,

whose intellects have been developed, tread occasionally on the very verge of madness. I know by my dreams that I am often on the edge of the precipice."

"But as to lunar influence?" says Adrian.

"Something in it. The devil's in the moon for mischief. Rome had a moon-god, Lunus, and the gems I have seen make him look like a promoter of madness. The moon putrefies meat, maddens men who sleep in its rays, rules the tides of ocean and the tidal currents of the brain. When a full moon and a handsome man have concurrent influence, few virgins preserve perfect sanity."

"You are half in jest, I see."

"Well—perhaps—the world *is* half a jest. You English are a humorous people, but your poets do not clearly perceive the humorous aspects of nature. It was Heine,

who spake of the Aristophanes of the universe. You find in the creation sublimity and beauty, of course; also you find every variety of humour and wit, from the practical joke to the epigram. Is it not a practical joke when a fly is caught in amber, or a lazy toad in a growing tree, or when the earth opens and swallows a city? Is it not the large mischief of the schoolboy gods? You open an oyster and find a pearl —or cleave an agate, and its veins delineate the lovely profile of a girl; are these not epigrams? Were there no humour in nature there would be none in man, for we are all autochthonic—all the sons of earth."

"You are a Pagan, I know," says Lord Waynflete smiling.

"Pagan assuredly I am, for the name means a villager: the word has a Dorian source, and signified all who drank water from the same well."

Then, as if to prove his paganism in the neoteric sense, he went off into a desultory dissertation on the true origin of Christmas, too prolix and too heretical to be reproduced here. Lord Waynflete sipped his claret, and listened with his feet upon the fender. A great wind had arisen, and was roaring around the turrets of Ashridge, and bringing with it a mighty fall of snow. Adrian listened with divine content to the sinuous sonorous periods, as men were wont to listen to Coleridge, as our great ancestor to the affable archangel, who

> ". . . . in Adam's ear
> So charming left his voice, that he awhile
> Thought him still speaking."

But when the close came, and Métivier had wrought out his mystic theory to the uttermost, Lord Waynflete rose, and drew the heavy window-curtains, and looked out upon a driving storm of snow, huge thick flakes, that seemed to descend inexhaustibly.

"You'll have to sleep here, Métivier," he said. "No reasoning animal would venture to set out for the Hut to-night."

And, without awaiting a reply, he rang the bell and ordered the preparation of a bed-chamber.

"Here is a practical joke, you see," said the Hermit. "Why should a snow-storm be sent just to prevent me from sleeping at home?"

"Rather, how can you expect so delicate an adjustment that snow shall fall wherever wanted, and yet there shall be a dry path to his cottage for a pagan poet? But come, 'tis a night for mulled Burgundy. We'll have a nightcap."

"You call me a pagan poet," quoth Métivier presently. "Now will I punish you by reading certain stanzas which this very morning I wrote as a Christian poet." And thus he read:—

CHRISTMAS is here again—the time of marvel and mirth—
Time when the Magi of old beheld a miraculous star;
Knew, or imagined they knew, that it meant a Divinity's birth;
Followed its bright vague trail of glory—followed it far—
Till after long slow toil they came to a region unknown,
Came to a mean little town; by the swimming splendour enticed
Entered a stable-door—and as if at the steps of a throne
Suddenly worshipping fell to a child just born—the CHRIST!

Well, did it happen or no? Did the Seraphim break through the sky,
Over the lonely hills, where shepherds were watching their sheep?
Did the King of the world descend among us to die,
While a swift shudder of awe struck through the demoniac deep?
Babies fresh from GOD come minute by minute to earth,
Bringing a light of heaven that will fade from their beautiful eyes:
Was there one of them once—who was GOD?—one baby-birth
Strong to turn evil to good, and make the foolish wise?

Ask the German Professor, cool, calm, ineffably sage,
Creature who scorns to tread where logic's analysis fails:
Ask the Colonial Bishop, whom contradictions enrage—
Keen arithmetical weigher of manna and counter of quails:
Ask the Pope, if you choose—infallible Temporal Prince,
Not quite certain himself, mayhap, how the future will fare.

Hierarch and pedant alike will reply, nor at dogmata wince—
But do they all believe what they tell you? *Ask elsewhere.*
Carol and anthem now are resonant everywhere;
Myriad eloquent lips tell out the tidings sublime;
Ring the sacred bells their festival peal through the air;
Gladly humanity welcomes the dear old Christmas-time;
Genial and generous thoughts in the sternest bosoms are stirred;
Chillest hearts grow warm, though the wines and the weather be iced:
Yet in this solemn tide what solemn question is heard!—
Christmas ye keep, in your way, but have ye forgotten THE CHRIST?

Yes, there are churches and creeds, and sects, and many to teach—
Oft men are willing to teach what men are unable to know;
Yes, but who can solve that terrible problem for each:
Whose is the hand divine that shall guide us whither we go?
One by one we depart alone—generations of men,
Passing over the verge as the stars that sink in the west.
Shall our spirits recover their force? and where? and when?
Questions for Christmas these, if life be not wholly a jest.

The two friends sat silent for some time after this effusion had been rapidly read: Métivier refreshed himself with some spiced Chambertin from the silver jug, while Adrian looked meditative.

"Yes," at last he said, thoughtfully, "there are some difficult problems around us, and we cannot help speculating on their solutions. But those solutions cannot be won yet; we have not reached the stage at which we are capable of this. So I suppose a man's aim should be to hold fast the present, and do his duty——"

"True," interrupted Métivier, "so teaches the Church Catechism—rightly intended by your Church for the average Englishman who sees no visions and can solve no problems. Thank you. I have imagination and intellect; my duty is to use these to the uttermost. I hold that difficulties are made to be overcome, and mysteries made to be revealed. Do you see?"

"I do," said Adrian, and they went to bed.

CHAPTER III.

THE ROTHCASTLE ELECTION.

THE Sunday after Christmas. A white world, and no mistake. Everywhere snow lying deep, and making the wild country strangely beautiful. As Adrian and the Hermit sat at breakfast, so placed that through the wide windows they could see miles of woodland overburdened with snow, the furs and pines carrying it in huge masses, they recognised the absolute advent of winter. It made the great logs burn cheerier, and gave a zest to the grilled birds and the hot coffee.

"You see England pleasantly from the

windows of a country house," said Métivier. "It doesn't look so well from those of a palace or a hovel. You English were made for the middle path—you should all be country gentlemen and enjoy life—you can't rule, and you can't starve. The countries that go on most easily are those in which a few are masters and all the rest slaves: people who don't want to be masters and who won't be slaves are the chief difficulty of modern society. It is men like you, Waynflete, who are destined to give trouble in this country—men who care for nothing but to be let alone."

"Have some grouse, Métivier," said Adrian. "I quite agree with you up to a certain point—we English were made for the middle path. Never truer word was spoken. We weren't made to hold slaves, and we certainly weren't made to be slaves. But instead of foreseeing any difficulty in that,

I think it is the strongest proof of our permanence. I look forward to the time when all Englishmen will be middle-class men—when, if there are titles, people will think nothing of them—when my butler or my keeper will be my equal in culture and courtesy and everything that constitutes a gentleman, and will do his duty none the worse for that."

"You're an ultra-Radical," said Métivier, laughing. "What does Lord Wraysbury say to such atrocious doctrines?"

"I'm a Tory," replied Adrian. "And I hold a theory which I would only venture to utter to a cosmopolite like you. It is that the English are the aristocracy of the world; the foremost race; the nation destined to rule all others. And the sooner we obtain equality among ourselves, the sooner shall we prove our superiority to the rest. Do you see?"

Lord Waynflete had echoed Métivier's question of the night before. The Hermit had not forgotten.

"Well," he said, "paradox against paradox. The probability is a simple case of the binomial theorem. I like your cool assumption of the aristocratic position of your English race, the most mixed race in the world, with all its Irish and Scotch and Welsh elements."

"Thank you," said Adrian; "but I don't admit your Irish, Welsh, and Scotch into the brotherhood. They are no more English than the Hindoos or the Chinese. Shakespeare is the supreme Englishman, and you can see what he thought of the inferior nations. No matter. We'll discuss all this some duller day. Snow always makes me cheery; and there's Big Dog longing to run out and have a tumble in it. How long since you went to church, Métivier?"

"*Foi de gentilhomme*, I don't know."

"Well, you shall come to-day with me. I want somebody to keep me in countenance while I face the multitudinous visitors to Mowbray Mansion. Old men and matrons, young men and maidens, they fill our poor little church; and, confound them! instead of looking at Rosvere, as they ought, they stare at *me* with all their eyes."

"So much the better for Rosvere," said Métivier. "Well, yes, I will accompany you. I know you have excellent reason for wishing to show yourself."

For, you see, Métivier was a man who used his five senses better than most folk—and he knew as well as possible that Adrian had a *tendresse* for the little governess at Mowbray's—and he had watched that child wandering over the springy turf of Ashridge Common with her pupil, and had thought her a very nice child indeed. And on

this occasion he said to himself, "Well, all English are equal. That's the great theory. Governess and Marchioness are convertible terms. Yes, I'll certainly go to church."

But Lord Waynflete did not need Métivier's countenance, for the only church-going folk from Mowbray Mansion were Amy and her pupil. The Christmas night had been fervid and fierce. There had been a dinner of the heaviest and most magnificent description, with wine beyond all ordinary habitude. Old man Manchester grew somewhat somnolent soon after dinner—but young male Manchester became blatant and enterprising; while young female Manchester forgot its dignity, and was rather frisky than otherwise. Little Ethel Evelyn had dined with the rest, as a matter of course, but had by no means enjoyed it. Since there was nobody at table of her own age, right glad was she

to slip out of the room at an early hour, and go quietly to bed, under Amy's care. Mr. Mowbray, divided in thought between his guests and his parliamentary project, almost forgot the existence of his daughter; so the poor child was frightened and unhappy, and delighted to find herself in her snug little bed, with Miss Gray helping her to say her prayers. Terrell, who saw everything, saw this.

"Why the devil," he said to himself, "does Mowbray feed this mob of fools, and neglect his pretty little daughter? There isn't a man here who would lend him fifty pounds if he were insolvent, or a woman who wouldn't marry him for his money. What shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue, as Edmund Burke said."

So reflected Terrell, but it did not prevent his being the life of the company that night, and getting much feminine Manchester under

the mistletoe, and appearing accoutred as a ghost when the lights burnt low for snap-dragon, and being quite the most brilliant performer when the rooms were cleared for dancing, and the world went wild with Sir Roger de Coverley. And when he had danced everybody down he made a mighty brewage of punch in a colossal bowl, and proposed Squire Mowbray's health in a speech that was equal to anything ever done by Demosthenes or Sheridan.

Ay, and when all the guests had found their way to their bedrooms, the Bohemian barrister was cool as ice. He said quietly to Mowbray, as he ascended the staircase,

"I shall be at Rothcastle to-morrow before you are out of bed. Your name, as yet, will not be mentioned. Sherwood is an astute attorney, and just the man we want: but I don't mean to trust him. He ought

to have been hanged long ago. Good night."

Mowbray returned the greeting, and went rather wearily to bed. He was a man of Manchester, yet somewhat above the Manchester level. There were times when he thought it was a waste of life to fill his house with guests whom it would be a mockery to call friends, or to pursue ambitious ends because he hated the aristocracy, and because he wanted to make a figure among the citizens of his native city. There were better impulses in Mowbray, but they got no chance of development; of late, however, since he had been struck by his little governess's beauty and simplicity, his purer feelings oftener found their way to the surface. Many a time did he regret that he occupied so large a space in the minds of men. What would the world say if Mowbray of Manchester married his governess?

On the morning of that Sunday Mowbray Mansion was singularly quiet. Terrell started early in a mail-phæton and pair for Rothcastle. The Squire had breakfast sent to his own room: such of his guests as had any appetite for breakfast did likewise. The servants, male and female, were equally lazy. So there was no one to go to church save Amy and her pupil; and they trotted through the snow, and reached the church with flushed faces and the blood tingling in their veins: and when the service was over, Adrian and the Hermit met them in the porch.

"Do you never get any holidays, Miss Gray?" asked Métivier, after a minute's conversation. "Here in England, for some inscrutable reason, everybody is supposed to go and see friends at Christmas. I am not an Englishman, and have no friends—

but I thought the rule admitted of no exceptions."

"I am an orphan," said Amy simply, though with a liquid lustre in her eyes, "and am glad to be in a comfortable home this Christmas weather. I suppose I may also say that I have no friends."

"And with equal truth, Miss Gray," said Adrian cheerily. "This fellow professes to have no friends, when he knows that I am as truly his friend as a young ignoramous dare venture to be to an elderly philosopher of acquirements almost unlawful. And I thought you had at least one friend in me, Miss Gray. Weren't we friends the moment we met in the railway carriage?"

"Yes indeed we were," she replied. "You know I did not use the word *friend* in that sense. I have always thought of you as the first friend I met when I came out into the world."

They were walking towards Ashridge village by this time. Métivier said,

"You will find Adrian a good friend, Miss Gray; I have always found him so. And if you will houour me with your friendship, come and see me at my Hut—you know where it is—and bring your pretty little pupil. I will show you and her all manner of scientific magic. Look in when you pass. Your happy young faces will brighten an old man's solitude."

Amy promised, and they parted.

"What a nice old gentleman!" exclaimed Ethel Evelyn. "Shall we go to see him, Miss Gray?"

"Very likely, my dear," she replied.

"Did you ever read De la Motte Fouqué's *Undine*, Adrian?" asked Métivier.

"Never."

"Then read it. You shall have my copy

if you'll walk as far as the Hut. It will teach you a lesson."

"All right, my friend," replied Lord Waynflete, rather absently.

Meanwhile, the Bohemian barrister had driven his horses through the snow at a smart pace to Rothcastle. Sherwood, rascalliest of attorneys, was not gone to church. Christmas night had been a convivial one, and he was trying the virtues of brandy and soda. Terrell could see that in a very short time he would be just as bad as he had been the night before. So he told him that he wanted to talk with him on most important business, and got him away from his house to a private room in the chief Rothcastle inn, and made him eat a mutton chop with much cayenne and Worcester sauce before he would say a word to him. Sherwood, after this treatment, became more manageable and intelligent.

"Now, Mister Terrell," says Sherwood, beginning to awake, "what's your business? I know you London gentlemen think Sundays the best day for business. It's wrong, it's very wrong, I'm sure; but you gentlemen will have your way. I don't know where you expect to go to. However, what's up?"

"If a man invariably gets drunk on Saturday night," quoth Terrell, "I am not surprised at his feeling reluctant to do any business on Sunday. Look here, Sherwood. I know you're as clever a fellow as ever was struck off the rolls, and if you will only be good enough to attend to what I have to say, you may make a few hundred pounds. You understand *that*, I suppose?"

"O yes," replied Sherwood, getting more collected, "I quite understand that. I am ready to listen."

"Very good. But I want you to answer

as well as to listen. You've been in some elections here at Rothcastle?"

"A few."

"And you've been on the Liberal side, always?"

"Of course I have. You don't think I'd be untrue to my party, do you, Mr. Terrell? I'm an advanced Liberal."

"Glad to hear it. Well, with your energy and capacity, how is it that the Liberal party have always been beaten?"

"Do you ask that question seriously, Mr. Terrell?"

"Seriously."

"Then I'm surprised at you. I thought you knew something about elections."

"Well, I thought so too," says the Bohemian. "But I don't quite see how I am to know why the Liberals are always beaten in a borough that I never entered till to-day. Perhaps you'll explain."

"Upon my word," says Sherwood, "you're trying very hard to make me think you're as green as grass. Look here. You know as well as I do that when parties are well balanced it's a question of money. I'm the Liberal agent. I go on the square, and it's late in the day, and a neck-and-neck thing. I've fifty or sixty men in hand. The Conservative agent comes to me and says, 'Don't poll your men.' Says I, 'How much a-head?' Says he, 'Ten, or twenty, or fifty, as it may be.' 'Honour?" says I. 'On the honour of a gentleman,' says he. So when the election expenses have been passed all right, he hands me a cheque for five hundred or a thousand."

"Why," exclaimed Terrell, indignantly, "you mean to say that you betray your party and your employer! How am I to treat with you? You'll betray me just as readily."

Therewith he rose from his chair, and looked as if he meant to depart.

"No, Mr. Terrell," interposed the attorney, "I won't betray you if you mean business! But I get a lot of duffers down here that haven't any money—and I'm a poor man, you know—and one *must* live."

"I'll be hanged if I see the necessity," thought Terrell, unconsciously reflecting Richelieu. "What's the most money you ever made by an election here, Sherwood?"

"About three hundred pounds, Mr. Terrell."

"Well, can I make sure of you for a thousand, certain—and something more, if my man wins?"

The attorney was amazed at so brilliant a prospect, and promised absolute loyalty.

"By Gad, Sherwood," said Terrell, "I know you're capable of anything; but if you serve me any dog's trick, I'll get you struck off the rolls. You know I mean what I say."

"You may depend on me, Mr. Terrell," said Sherwood.

"I hope I may. Now, tell me. Supposing we've an election, is there any chance for a Liberal candidate?"

"The best in the world, if he's got money. Everybody in Rothcastle has his price."

"Not forgetting the attorney," thought Terrell. "Very well, Sherwood, I quite understand the situation. I want to get in a man for Rothcastle at the next election. You will make at least a thousand pounds thereby. Have you got the poll-books, or any other election records within reach?"

Sherwood, an astute political agent, had of course plenty of such materials, and the two went over them carefully together. It was quite clear that parties were evenly balanced. There were about equal numbers marked C. and L.; but these by no means exhausted the list of electors. Evi-

dently a very large body were of an independent character, actuated by motives which should not perhaps be too nicely investigated. Mysterious marks were placed against many names; one would mean that the voter wanted an invitation to the County Ball for his wife and daughters, another that he had a son whose genius marked him for a Custom-house officer. There were men who voted in groups, men who voted by order, men who wouldn't vote at all unless they were highly remunerated, men who voted as their wives told them to vote, men who received bribes from one side while their wives did likewise from the other, men who received bribes from both sides and got their daughters to do the same, men whom nobody save Aristophanes could properly classify. When I can shake myself free of writing for money, I will humbly imitate the great Greek comedian,

and tell the world a few things concerning English electioneering. But this is apart from my present purpose. I have only to observe here that Sherwood proved to Terrell the possibility of winning a Rothcastle election, if certain measures were taken.

And what said Terrell?

Simply this: "We can have no bribery, Sherwood: we must go into the House with clean hands. But if we win you shall have a cheque for .... perhaps I had better not say how much."

"*L'homme propose.*" Although it had been authoritatively declared that Sir Arthur Halsted could not live a week—and that by his principal physician—the old baronet's strong constitution kept him alive till just before Parliament met, till the Marquis of Wraysbury and his wife and daughter had returned to Ashridge. When an elderly gentleman has been partridge-shooting and

fox-hunting all his life, you must not too readily rely on his doctor's predictions about his death. The hale old baronet held on, defying his terrible assailant. Mowbray and Terrell grew savage over the business, for they wanted to snatch a victory, and every hour was precious.

And when the Marquis returned he was at once bored on the subject. First there were his own people talking about it. Then came "private and confidential" communications from Victoria Street, Westminster. Wouldn't Lord Waynflete stand? That was the burden of the song.

Lord Waynflete laughed at the idea. He had heard the House of Commons described as the pleasantest club in London. Perhaps so; but he hated clubs, and he held in high contempt a good many persons whom he knew to be members of the club in question. He decidedly declined to have any-

thing to do with Rothcastle, and he had herein his father's complete approval.

"The House of Commons is no place for a gentleman," the Marquis was wont to say.

But one day, as they sat at breakfast, there came a missive which changed the current of affairs. Confound these postmen, they are always bringing what one doesn't want—while 'tis rare that they bring what one does want. This letter was from the chief of the party—the man in whom the gentlemen of England trusted, and trusted wisely: and it said, for the sake of the cause—and for my sake also—let your son contest Rothcastle.

This was a command. Adrian had to fling himself into the dreary depths of a borough election. It was the hardest trial of his life. He cordially hated the whole affair. He particularly disliked throwing himself into opposition to Mowbray, who

was first in the field. But the thing had to be done, and so, like a true Englishman, he determined to do it.

You see, he had taken Métivier's advice, and had read De la Motte Fouqué's marvellous romance, and had learnt therefrom the lesson which the poetic Norman desired him to learn. This veteran of thought and life, who had known many women in books and in the world, saw very clearly into the pure palpitating heart of Amy Gray. He saw what the inspiring breath of love would make of her. And believing—as all men who know the world aright believe—in the supreme efficacy of woman's love, he held that Amy Gray was the very creature his young friend Adrian wanted. Adrian had, as we know, begun to think likewise; he was building castles in the air for this shy little governess; he was dreaming a honeymoon idyl—a scene of soft seclusion by

marge of sea, or in depth of mere and woodland.

Once, but ah once only!
And swiftly it passes away,
The night that is never lonely,
And the long calm indolent day.

Once—and the heart remembers
That sweet brief time alone,
Though the frost of drear Decembers
Has turned that heart to stone.

Once—ah she may not clutch you,
Lying stiff there under the sod:
Never more may her warm breast touch you
With the loving gift of God.

This lyric excursion belongs to the author, and by no means to Adrian, Lord Waynflete, whose poetic faculty was of a gayer order. What he may do, between Métivier and the little governess, must be left uncertain: for at present he has no time for such trivial affairs, having to hold public meetings, and canvass Rothcastle, and do a great many things that were wholly alien from his nature. However, like your Eng-

lish gentleman generally, he stuck to his work; he talked politics with much fluency to large meetings of riff-raff; he asked people for their votes, and very often got a promise, seeing that he was a wonderfully pleasant young man for a lord, and would treat a peasant or a peasant's wife on precisely equal terms. This natural simplicity of his was of much value in the election. The fellows who went round with him could not help patronizing these people, but Adrian could not patronize anybody. When he talked to a labourer's wife or daughter as courteously as if she had been a lady in all respects his equal, his associates in canvassing were unable to understand it. But this was no affectation on his part; it was his natural and ineradicable habit.

By-and-by the nomination day approached, the worthy old Tory baronet having effectually accepted his Chiltern Hundreds from

the hand of death. Squire Mowbray was terribly disgusted. The gipsies came in full force, and took possession of Ashridge Common, just as they had done before Rothcastle Fair. Angry he grew; angrily would he have dealt with the Romany race, but that Terrell and Sherwood, his chief political advisers, dissuaded him from taking any violent measures. When the great day arrived, and the hustings were built up before the ruinous unfinished Market Place, the town was crowded with gipsies.

You know what happens on such occasions. First the Honourable Adrian Waynflete, called by courtesy the Earl of Waynflete, was proposed and seconded by two fluent and rubicund gentlemen. Then two gentlemen, equally fluent and rubicund, did the same for Edward Mowbray, Esquire. Then Lord Waynflete made a speech, which was in some portions quite intelligible to the

working men of his audience, and in other parts entirely over their heads. That's the worst of your well-meaning young noblemen; he wants to popularize ideas which are at present as strange to an ordinary Englishman's brain as bird's-nest soup to his palate.

Then Mowbray broke out into rather a sonorous oration, lauding the magnificent memory of Cobden, and the mighty magniloquence of Bright.

Then something happened.

Just in the midst of Squire Mowbray's noblest eloquence, a brick flew over the heads of the crowd with admirable aim. I fear it was intended for the candidate's skull. It fell on a weaker point—his right arm—and broke it. Mowbray finished his speech with perfect tranquillity for all that. There was no want of pluck in this man. What he wanted was *light*—a greater want than any other among us English. Well, he

went through his address to the electors with as much ease as if he had not been suffering severe pain; and he stood quietly through the show of hands, which was in his favour.

And when all this was over he turned to Terrell, and said,

"I fancy there's a bone broken in my arm. We'll go to Dr. Westall's. I saw who threw that brickbat—it was Black Jack Johnson, the gipsy. Will you make the police look after him? I have particular reasons for wanting to get hold of him."

As he was thus talking to the Bohemian barrister, Lord Waynflete came across the hustings to express a hope that he was not seriously injured. Mowbray replied curtly; and poor Adrian went home wishing that political antagonism did not transform men into churls—or brutes. He detested the

whole business so completely, that he could not take a healthy view of it.

'Tis the same with us all. The world is full of things that make men weep, when they are between twenty and thirty. Twenty years later, these same things make them laugh. Let them live two decades more, and they will regard them with the same indifference as the gods who dwell on Olympus.

To return. Edward Mowbray, who regarded nothing with indifference, had a special objection to Black Jack Johnson's brick. Nobody likes a broken arm. Mowbray was awfully savage. The police were put on their mettle; and Black Jack was caught, and was on this occasion too carefully incarcerated to find any way of escape.

The night of the nomination ended with a grand row at Rothcastle. The gipsies, who had mustered in force, were very fierce

when Black Jack was seized. They couldn't rescue him, so they revenged themselves in a general breakage of heads and of windows. It was a busy week for surgeons and glaziers.

CHAPTER IV.

WHAT HAPPENED TO ETHEL EVELYN.

THERE is nothing certain but the unforeseen. This is rather a clever sort of proverb, and of course pertains to the French; but I can't wholly agree with it. Several unpleasant things which I clearly foresaw have happened to me—which they ought not to have done were this adage true.

Two people, namely Terrell and Sherwood, clearly and certainly foresaw Mowbray's return as member for Rothcastle—and it happened. He had won a great victory—two great victories, indeed. He

had beaten the Wraysbury interest, and he had got Jack Johnson in gaol. The Squire, notwithstanding his broken arm, was happy. He was so confoundedly happy when he got home from Rothcastle after returning thanks —with his strong right arm in a sling, mind you—that he went straight to his room without thinking of his daughter or of his daughter's governess. His doctor looked at his arm, and he turned in and fell placidly asleep, with two delicious ideas in his head.

He was M.P., and had beaten a Marquis.

He had also beaten and imprisoned a very troublesome and aggressive gipsy.

Surely, after such triumphs, the Squire had a right to sleep soundly. He slept excellent well, but for a slight inflammation in his right arm, where Black Jack's brick had fallen so heavily.

Meanwhile the little heiress and her governess had gone quietly to bed. Ethel

Evelyn, poor child, had been rather troublesome.

"Papa never speaks to me now," she complained. "He is always so busy. I don't see the good of having a papa if he leaves me all alone like this. I shall run away, I shall."

Our Amy laughed at her, reasoned with her, consoled her; told her that papa was very busy indeed, and had had an accident, and would be sure to think of her the very first thing to-morrow. But the little fiery thing, who loved her father intensely, waxed hotter and hotter about it, and declared that papa hated her, and she hated him, and she would run away from him, that she would. Nor was it until Amy had reluctantly acted on Miss Pinnock's recipe that this passionate baby subsided sobbing into her nest, in a little room which opened upon that of the governess.

Having seen her troublesome little pupil safely asleep, Amy thought she might as well follow her example. So the fair child unrobed herself, and read a chapter in the Gospel of Saint John, and knelt down by her bedside to say her prayers, and then sat in an easy-chair which stood by her bedside, and crossed her knees, and crossed her hands over her knees, and thought—thought —thought. Am I to tell you a young girl's thoughts? Ask me to catch the rose's perfume—to cork the moonlight in a chymist's phial—to shut the nightingale's song into a musical-box. I think she thought of Mr. Mowbray, and wondered why he changed so often, and why he was sometimes so kind and courteous, and why sometimes he did not seem to know that she existed. I am sure she thought of Adrian—thought of him as differing from all men she had ever seen —wondered whether he thought at all of

her—then blushed, the innocent creature, ay, blushed all over, to find that she thought so very, very much of one whom she saw so seldom and who had simply been kind to her. It was very wrong, she knew. It was quite wicked. What right had she to think about Lord Waynflete, a young nobleman who was so far above her? What would Miss Pinnock say, if she confessed her naughtiness to her? The rigid Angelina would be for treating her as she had been obliged to treat Ethel Evelyn. It was very naughty of her, she felt aware. However, she did not write a confession of her naughtinesss to Miss Angelina Pinnock. She got into bed, and wrapt herself round with linen and visions, and dreamt that Lord Waynflete came in the night and carried her away in a baloon. And then again she dreamt that the balloon had taken away Ethel Evelyn instead of her. No Lord Waynflete was

the aëronaut this time, but some hideous monster of gorilla grade.

Whether dreams are ever preadmonitions is one of the most vexed questions of the psychologists. The affirmative has the support of an antique and even immemorial belief. Modern cases of apparent authenticity are not wanting in maintenance of the theory. Questionless, sleep, as a state of humanity, has never yet been philosophically investigated: if your philosopher, instead of pulling on his nightcap and snoring, would pass into the Realm of Dreams more leisurely, more thoughtfully, he might learn something worth knowing. If only the problem of sleep were solved, the greater problem of death would present less difficulty—for they are cognate.

When Amy Gray awoke after this visionary night she was beset by curious feelings. After going right away into Dreamland,

eating its haschish and drinking its nepenthe, one opens one's eyes rather perplexedly in the bright clear air of the earth's real morning. The change is too sudden—from that remote strange land, where all is mystery and marvel, to the commonplace earth, with its effects that follow causes with unvarying stupidity. The delight of Dreamland is that every incident is unexpected; nothing happens that ought to happen; very seldom indeed does anything happen that can happen.

My little governess, Amy Gray, had excellent reason to remember the strange visions of that night, and the stranger event which followed those visions. In the suite of rooms which were assigned to herself and her pupil, it was so arranged that their bedchambers communicated; and Amy always left the door between them open, in case little Ethel should wake and be frightened.

But this had never happened. The child was a sound sleeper and an early waker; and Amy was quite accustomed on fine mornings to see Ethel almost dressed at her bedside, long before any one else was astir in the house. Having had to wake early in her days at the Orphan School, she did not find this any very great annoyance. I don't think early rising does harm to very young persons, although to those who have reached maturity its evil effects are incalculable. It has been foolishly urged by the advocates of this bad habit, that unless you get up early you cannot enjoy the exquisite beauty of sunrise. But a man who gets up early is quite unfit to appreciate a superb sunrise; whereas, after a rather late supper, sunrise comes like a divine surprise, and you open more champagne in honour of it.

Late slept everybody at Mowbray Mansion on the morning after the election—later

even than on the morning after Christmas Day. The Squire himself was among the earliest awake, for his arm irritated him, and he longed for his doctor. He also wanted to see his little daughter, whom he had been forgetting in the election excitement. He rang his bell; his valet came, rather drowsy, for they had consumed a good deal of strong ale in honour of the election in the servants' hall.

"What time is it?" asked the Squire.

"Half-past eight, sir."

And he said it as sleepily as if it meant the middle of the night.

"When my daughter is up, I want to see her. Go and tell the maid that waits on her, will you? But I don't wish Miss Gray to be disturbed."

Thus saying, the Squire returned to his pillow, with restless disgust. And the valet, with a fine idea of his duty, went

quickly back to his own room, and threw himself on his bed, and vainly tried to sleep off the confounded headache which had come of last night's ale.

Well, the laziest folk must wake in time. Our Amy awoke—her spirit came home from Dreamland—and she wondered where Ethel Evelyn was.

"Ethel!" she cried, not very loudly, with that pretty rosy face still on the pillow.

Ethel answered not.

"What a sleepy little girl!" thought Amy. "Really——"

She never finished that sentence, but fell to sleep again herself, and had two or three nice dreamlets.

Then she awoke again.

"Ethel!"

No answer.

"Really, the child must be very fast asleep. I wonder what time it is?"

Amy had not arrived as yet at the dignity of a watch.

She stretched: and then she reluctantly put her feet out of bed; and then she went into her pupil's room, expecting to see the child asleep.

Ethel Evelyn was not there.

Amy was in no degree alarmed, thinking that the child had grown tired of lying in bed, and had dressed, and gone into the garden. She also dressed, leisurely enough. But when she descended, and made inquiries for her pupil, Ethel was not to be found. After going where the child was wont to wander, she came to the breakfast-room, and there found Terrell, and at once told him all her trouble. Not without tears, not very calmly, for she was a mere baby, this Amy, and she loved her troublesome little Ethel.

Terrell was much in the habit of jumping

to conclusions, and then finding justifying details for those conclusions. He had been breakfasting on a bloater and brandy and soda, and his brain was clear. He went straight to the little girl's room. He examined the windows—there were two—overlooking a terrace-walk. He inquired about the child's clothes. Those which she had worn on the previous day were gone.

"What does it mean?" asked Amy, excitedly. "Where can she be, Mr. Terrell?"

"Quite safe, I think," he said. "My impression is that the gipsies have stolen her. They have a quarrel with our friend Mowbray."

Poor little Amy was so frightened that she could not speak; if she had attempted it, she must have burst into hysterical sobs. So she made no reply.

And Terrell said nothing for some time.

Then he came up to her, and took her hand in his, and said—

"Miss Gray, this is a great trial to you—but it will be a far greater trial to Mowbray. The little girl will be recovered, but it may take some time. He has caused the gipsies to be very angry with him, and this is their revenge. Now the great thing is to keep him cool. If he does anything rash—and he is terribly rash sometimes—he may never see that dear little girl again. If he is cool and quiet, she will soon be found. I want you to influence him, Miss Gray; you have great influence over him."

"*Me!*" she exclaimed, with sincere amazement.

"Yes, you. I shall do my best to induce him to try a quiet policy, and I hope I may succeed. But you must help me, Miss Gray. I am sure you can do it if you will. Come, say you'll do your best."

"I will indeed," she replied, extending her hand as a pledge thereof.

"Good. Then I'll at once go and tell him that the little girl is missing." And on this errrand he at once started; saying to himself, as he walked along the corridor,

"By Jove, that little governess has more sense and pluck than any young fellow I have seen for a year or two."

It would be difficult to describe Edward Mowbray's anger when his friend told him what had happened. He had gone to bed elate with triumph, yet somewhat pulled down by the accident to his arm. Full of power and vigour though a man may be, physical accidents will have their effect upon him; and Mowbray, who possessed the *mens sana in corpore sano* to perfection, was yet rather knocked over by his broken arm. Wherefore, when in addition thereto came the news of Ethel Evelyn's disappear-

ance, the Squire did not preserve his customary equanimity of temper; and I am sadly afraid that his first reply to the Bohemian barrister took a slightly objectionable form. He execrated the whole Zingari race with splendid volubility.

Terrell, always patient under all circumstances, waited quietly till the explosion was over. Then he said—

"Look here, Mowbray, it is no use your exciting yourself in your present state of health. There can be no question that your friends the gipsies have done this thing, in revenge for your shutting up Black Jack Johnson. If you make a great fuss, and offer rewards, and so on, these people will simply laugh at you and defy you."

"What do you expect me to do?" asked Mowbray, irritably, sitting up in his bed. "Am I to submit to them quietly? Am I to lose my daughter and do nothing? I

won't be made a fool of by these scoundrels —I'll drive every gipsy in England into the sea before I'll give in to them."

"What to do is simple enough," replied the Bohemian barrister. "Employ a good detective—I know the very man; and at the same time cause friendly inquiry to be made among the gipsies themselves. Of course there must be the ordinary business among the local police; but, if the gipsies have really taken the little girl, I don't think the county constabulary will do much."

"Well, I'll get up," said Mowbray, "and then we'll give orders."

So Terrell left him, and in ten minutes he was in the library, pale from excitement and physical suffering, but very full of resolution and energy. An officer of police arrived soon after, and in his presence Amy Gray gave her account of the child's disappearance. There was not much to tell.

She had seen the little girl safely and cosily in bed on the previous evening—this morning her bed was vacant and her clothes were gone.

Everything was done that in such cases is always done. The congregation of gentlemen in blue, with a red badge on each right coat-sleeve, that pervaded the back doors of Mowbray Mansion for some days, was rather remarkable: I very sincerely hope there were no robberies going on in other parts of the county. I hope the old ladies carefully locked up their spoons while these affable and intelligent guardians of the public peace were drinking beer and offering opinions for the benefit of themselves and the housemaids at Mowbray.

However, matters were not wholly left to the intelligence of the bucolic constabulary. Terrell, who knew everybody everywhere, of course knew the cleverest detec-

tive in England . . . . not, mind you, a professional detective with a commission from Scotland Yard, but a fellow who detected for detection's sake. The solution of puzzles had occupied his babyhood. When a boy he took to enigmas and geometrical problems and St. John's College equations: he also showed so fine a capacity for opening other people's letters, and for finding out their secrets by any means whatsoever, that several schoolmasters, unaware of the genius which he possessed, first flogged, and then expelled him. Although his cuticle suffered severely in consequence of his resolute pursuit of forbidden knowledge, he was in no degree discouraged: and when his father, absurdly irate because he had read a series of peculiarly private letters, indignantly kicked him out of doors, he made his way to the capital, poked his nose into several secrets that came invitingly his way, and

finally was able to secure a dark den in a small court near Fleet Street, and to set up on the panel of the door a brass plate with the inscription :

Lipsett.
Secret Investigation Office.

Terrell had employed this Lipsett—David Lipsett was his name—several times ; had always found him marvellously acute and prompt, and with stores of out-of-the-way knowledge, which frequently turned to unexpected use ; so he went to town and gave him a retainer, and set him at work to trace the missing child. Lipsett took to the business *con amore :* he fully accepted Terrell's theory that the gipsies were the thieves, and he made inquiries about and among them with extreme dexterity. Excellent at disguises, he turned himself into a travelling hawker, and went through the country with

a donkey-cart, whose load was of most miscellaneous character; always in the track of some gipsy tribe, always with keen eyes watchful for stray little girls.

Terrell likewise had a notion of friendly negotiation with the gipsies, and made several efforts in this direction. But they did not avail. This curious vagabond race, which came like the rest of us from the east, and which pervades the west, is not to be approached without introduction. A Romany chal will sell to you, swindle you, steal from you, but he will not permit you the honour of his intimacy unless you have some authoritative claim thereto. He is quite as exclusive in his way as the most fashionable of the queens of fashion. Hence was it that Terrell, though indefatigable in his endeavour, wholly failed in obtaining any assistance from the gipsies. They regarded him with suspicion, and he was un-

able to meet with anyone who had an *entente cordiale* with them.

On Edward Mowbray the abduction of his little daughter had a doubly depressing and irritating effect. He loved the child very much indeed; any father can imagine what would be his feelings under such sad circumstances. Beyond this, Mowbray found himself utterly foiled and defied at the very moment of his great political triumph; this to a man of his peculiar temperament was a thing very difficult to bear. Black Jack Johnson had been committed for trial at the Quarter Sessions; but the Grand Jury ignored the bill, and he walked off unscathed. This was a minor nuisance. Mowbray's greater trouble made him careless of such a trifle.

Little Amy was terribly perplexed and very miserable at this time. She was very fond of her pupil, and used to have hideous

dreams night after night of the poor little girl undergoing all sorts of hardships. Sometimes she saw the child on a wild wide common—this delicate darling always so daintily cared for—running along in wretched rags, begging for coppers. Sometimes she imagined her in London or some other great city, an unhappy little mendicant. Of these and many other painful possibilities she dreamt at night, she meditated by day. Then, although conscience-clear in the matter, she feared that the child's disappearance might, in the minds of Mr. Mowbray and others, be connected with carelessness on her part.

Moreover, as weeks passed on, there was a difficulty in reference to herself. Her pupil lost, what was the governess's duty? She wrote a full statement of the case to the oracular Miss Angelina Pinnock, and that lady sent a reply that troubled poor Amy.

First, Miss Pinnock seemed to think that the loss of a pupil was a thing that could not possibly occur to "a well-conducted young person;" next, she decided that Amy's duty was to leave Mr. Mowbray at once, and to come to the Orphan School until some other position could be obtained for her. Amy, who greatly admired Miss Pinnock (at a distance), was by no means desirous to return within those grim walls, and again obey that excellent but rigorous instructress.

She would have taken counsel with Miss Priscilla Cust, the kindest and weakest old woman in the world; but the sad event had caused Miss Cust to collapse, and after walking about the house for a few days with tears dropping from her eyes like a cataract, she at last took refuge in her bedchamber, and was seen no more. Mr. Mowbray also, what with his fractured arm and

his excitement about his daughter, had for some time forgotten Miss Gray's existence. So the poor child was lonely and wretched, and did not know what she ought to do. But the Bohemian barrister came and told her.

"Miss Gray," says he, "you are making yourself miserable. Don't. We shall soon recover your pupil for you."

"Oh, Mr. Terrell," responded Amy, "you are very kind. I am so wretched. Please tell me what I ought to do. Oughtn't I to go away at once?"

"Go away! Certainly not!"

"But I had a letter from my old schoolmistress yesterday, and she says it is my duty to leave at once."

"She's a fool, Miss Gray," says Terrell, causing Amy to open those soft eyes of hers very wide indeed. "Don't be astonished," he added. "When you're a few years older

you'll know that all schoolmistresses *are* fools."

"And what are governesses then, Mr. Terrell?" she couldn't help asking.

"Rogues," quoth Terrell. "But seriously, Miss Gray, you are wanted here. Little Ethel will be found again, sooner or later. Meanwhile, my friend Mowbray must be calmed down; he is worrying himself; he is getting his brain into a bad state. I told you sometime ago you had influence over him. Now he has consented to come down to dinner to-day, and you must be there to console him. That old Miss Cust has dissolved into tears, and the servants have to bring them away from her bedrooms in cans. She is useless; but I want Mowbray to have a healthy pleasant talk with you."

The dinner thus arranged by the Bohemian preluded a very close intimacy between the Squire and the governess. He was un-

happy and needed consolation; and consolation that comes in the form of a pretty girl is seldom disagreeable. He began to think that he was a great fool to care what Manchester might say about whom he should marry; he also thought that if his only child were lost, greater was the reason for his having other children. The idea of dying childless, and leaving his money to charities, by no means suited Mowbray. So he studied our little Amy; and found her, with every day's study, a more delightful little girl; and at last absolutely resolved that he would marry her. That she would refuse him was a notion that did not enter his head: the wish of Mowbray of Manchester must of course be a command to a little penniless orphan governess.

"Yes," he said to himself, "I'll have her. She's a quiet, sensible child, with a sort of shy beauty that is very nice. Yes—I'll have

her, and Sir Jacob may grin if he likes."

Meanwhile, our Amy, unforeseeing anything of this sort, had been doing what she thought was her duty to the Squire. He wanted consoling, Mr. Terrell said; Miss Gray did her best to console him. It was her duty. They were wont to walk out together in the morning, and Amy used to encourage Mr. Mowbray to talk, and would look up in his face with a pretty air of absorbing interest. O what impostors they are, these women! and how often, dear reader, do your wife and daughter laugh loyally at your puns and listen to your stories, while all the time they are wishing you would go to Jericho or your Club, and leave them free to talk of the wickedness of the servants, or of the last new thing in petticoats!

Women indeed are such impostors that they sometimes impose on themselves; and Amy Gray, by dint of consoling Squire

Mowbray, began to persuade herself that she liked him. I don't mean to say she fell in love with him; but when a man and woman meet there is always a certain magnetic or odylic communication between them, which Mesmer or Reichenbach might explain. Amy had not met Lord Waynflete for a long time. He had been too occupied with the troublesome business of the election to find time for loitering in the village of Ashridge—while she, after her pupil's disappearance, had scarcely ventured beyond the grounds of Mowbray Mansion, except when she went to church. And, though she saw Adrian's tall figure in the chancel, there was no longer an opportunity for an exchange of greetings in the churchyard.

Besides, the time soon came when Mowbray could no longer delay taking his seat in the House. Private grief must give way

to public duty. Manchester, proud of her energetic and successful son, expected him to win still higher distinction. His friends, Terrell among the rest, urged it upon him; they argued that he was doing his utmost in every way for his child's recovery, and that meanwhile he should not neglect the duties of his station.

Mowbray was persuaded. He took a furnished house at Prince's Gate, caused Miss Cust to be aroused from her lachrymose condition, and removed to town with his usual promptitude.

So Amy Gray passed out of the region wherein Lord Waynflete dwelt, and made acquaintance with London. She found her time very much her own. Mr. Mowbray breakfasted at home, but after breakfast she saw little of him, except on Sundays, when he was fond of escorting her to any place of worship notorious at the time for ritualism

or heresy, for eloquence or music. The Parliamentary passion had seized him. A thorough man of business, he enjoyed being on committees. He was in every division, and sat out every debate to the last. And, a subject coming up which he perfectly understood, he made a maiden speech that was very brief, but so full of information that every morning paper had a leader based upon it next day.

Amy therefore was to a great extent her own mistress. Miss Cust lay on a sofa all day, and read Drelincourt on *Death*, Blair's *Grave*, Young's *Night Thoughts*, *In Memoriam*, and other equally lively books. Miss Gray had Mr. Mowbray's carriage placed at her disposal, but would have been too timid to use it if it had not been for Terrell.

"The horses must have exercise,'" said the Bohemian. "If you won't ride, they'll have to go out all the same."

And he made out for her a list of drives, designed to introduce her to all the exquisite suburbs of England metropolis. "The inhabitants of London," writes Mr. Disraeli, "are scarcely sufficiently sensible of the beauty of its environs. On every side the most charming retreats open to them, nor is there a metropolis in the world surrounded by so many rural villages, picturesque parks, and elegant casinos. With the exception of Constantinople, there is no city in the world that can for a moment enter into competition with it." Terrell, who knew the vicinage of London as well as most people, and who had a great admiration for Amy Gray, drew out for her a lucid and exhaustive programme of suburban travel, with quaint little annotations of his own. So in course of time she grew acquainted with all the outlying regions wherein the lord of Hughenden delights. She be-

held, from the heights of Hampstead, London lying like a magic city which Afreets have shrouded with a black canopy of fog. She saw the crystal caprice of the gardener-architect crowning its pleasant hill. She trod the emerald lawns of Hampton's palace by the Thames. By-and-by she persuaded Miss Priscilla Cust to rouse herself and accompany her; and soon discovered that the ancient maiden lady had been young once, and had in her youth known London's suburbs well.

Ay, there was a forgotten romance in Priscilla's life. Strange though it seems to the vivid young creature who is entering a new world, these withered maidens have been young in their time, have been beautiful, mayhap have loved and been loved. Miss Cust's reminiscences pointed to days when she had joined gay parties in the haunts of pleasure which surround this city.

One day they were driving past the "Star and Garter" at Richmond, since destroyed by the fire-fiend, that "great red dragon that is born of the little red eggs we call *sparks*." Don't you agree, gentle reader, with the poet of the *Graphic* in his warning to the architect of our next "Star and Garter"?

> O lucky architect whom Fate
> Shall choose this house to reinstate,
> Be with its pleasant memories tender,
> Its quaint caprices don't surrender,
> Its old fantastic forms renew—
> Poets and wits shall kudize you.
> Don't mimic London's monsters, hang 'em!—
> Stiff Charing Cross and lumbering Langham:
> Build nothing vaster, nothing smarter—
> Give back our own old "Star and Garter."

I fear this is too much to hope for.

I am forgetting Miss Cust. Her eyes were brimful of tears as they drove into the Park. She could not help telling her story that day—and our Amy was a sympathizing listener. A story simple enough—a young

officer killed in battle, and his betrothed left sadly alone in the world. But Amy sympathised; and Miss Priscilla Cust liked her young companion all the better after having told her the sorrow of her own unforgotten youth.

Amy in her turn found sympathy from Miss Cust. She told her the story of her long imprisonment; described the sordid life that she had led; sketched, half in admiration, half in fear, the immaculate Miss Pinnock.

"Don't you think, my dear," said the old lady one day, "you should call on Miss Pinnock? You have been in London so long that she will think you wilfully neglect her."

"I am half afraid," replied Amy, laughing at herself. "She will be sure to scold me for staying at Mr. Mowbray's against her orders."

"O, I'll set that all right. I'll go with you. I want to see this wonderful woman. Shall we drive there to-morrow?"

"If you like," answered Miss Gray.

She rather enjoyed the idea, having a recollection that Miss Pinnock—notwithstanding her immense superiority to all other women—was apt to be impressed by a carriage and pair. Mr. Mowbray's equipage and horses were of course perfect.

CHAPTER V.

A PROPOSAL OF MARRIAGE.

"OLIM haec meminisse juvabit." There are some people who do not feel this with reference to an unpleasant past. But I wholly agree with pious and prosy Aeneas. The places wherein I spent my youth are hallowed by few poetic reminiscences; few were my friends in those far days, and many my persecutors; yet have I made pilgrimage to many scenes of my boyish trouble, and seen the happy sunshine lighting them up, and smiled at the recollection of my trivial tears of yore. The world rolls on; the streams flow, the birds

sing, the boys and girls laugh; the dull old mother of us all cares nothing, though one of her children writes himself *Miserrimus*. How sang the old harper in Wilhelm Meister?—

> Who ne'er his bread in sorrow ate,
> Who ne'er the mournful midnight hours
> Weeping upon his bed hath sat,
> He knows you not, ye heavenly powers.

Amy Gray felt a certain bitter pleasure in revisiting her prison-house. All her childhood, which should have been joyous, had been spent there; never had she seen wild woodlands, or meadows so covered with bluebells that it seemed as if a patch of sky had fallen, or rivers edged with yellow flags, while white water-lilies floated on them. She had lost her childhood; the stout governors of the institution, even with the aid of clever Miss Pinnock, could never give it back to her. As yet, perchance, she does not know how great her loss; she will find it out if

she should ever have children of her own.

It is not generally understood, but it is quite true for all that, that a man who has once known sorrow, can never thereafter be happy—any more than a man who has once known illness can ever thereafter be healthy. Of both health and happiness there are some pretty good imitations; but the reality is as rare as the philosopher's stone.

How pathetic, if read aright, are the words of Achilles to Priam in the *Iliad!*

Καὶ σὲ, γέρον, τὸ πρὶν μὲν ἀκούομεν ὄλβιον εἶναι.

And thou, old man, wast happy once, they say. Happy once! Ay, that is the burden of the lives of mortal millions. Happy once—happy nevermore; how can they be, when the cruel agony has torn their souls as a rude fragment of shell tears the fair flesh of the soldier close to his beating heart? Those are best off, doubtless,

who cannot be happy, and who therefore cannot suffer. "A hard heart and a strong stomach," said Talleyrand—these twain make life endurable.

Let us return from the tents of the son of Peleus to the Orphan Institution, at whose Doric portico Mr. Mowbray's two bright bays have just stopped. Now it so chanced that Miss Pinnock was sitting at a certain side window which conveniently overlooked the front entrance; so she saw the barouche drive up, and recognised Amy Gray therein. Miss Gray's companion, an aristocratic old lady superbly dressed, produced on Miss Pinnock a favourable impression. She rose from her seat, and shook out her own silken attire, and descended to receive her visitors with a perfect mixture of dignity and benignity. And she entertained them with cake and pale sherry and the most eloquent conversation in the world.

That conversation I will not attempt to repeat. It turned on many topics; the disappearance of Miss Mowbray, Mr. Mowbray's Parliamentary career, Miss Gray's future prospects, the marvellous progress of the girls in the first class at the Orphan School, and finally, Miss Pinnock herself. All her fluent sentences led to this climax. Miss Pinnock regarded herself as fit to be the regeneratrix of the world: if the Destinies had not placed her in the proper position, the loss was more the world's than hers. The cleverest folk, male or female, who are victims of inordinate conceit, become ludicrous even to their inferiors. Miss Cust was anything but a clever old lady, but as they drove home she had a quiet laugh with Amy at Miss Pinnock's amazing self-conceit.

Mowbray, as we have seen, had plunged into the political vortex. He was popular in the house. He was a millionaire, which

always gives a man the lead in any line in England: I don't say that he will keep the lead, if there is a man of genius, or even of consummate ability, to wrest it from him. But every year gives greater weight to wealth: even the people's Parliament seems likely to have a majority of millionaires: even Mr. Bright rather deprecates the notion of Mr. Odger's coming

"Betwixt the wind and his nobility,"

and sitting below the gangway. Mowbray, a millionaire, an advanced Liberal, a man of business, a good speaker, a pleasant fellow in his way, seemed to have the ball at his foot. Much would he have enjoyed his position, but for his uncertainty about Ethel and his fancy for Amy Gray.

Lipsett had obtained no news of the missing child, though he had worked very hard, exploring every haunt of the gipsies. His efforts ended in utter failure. His own be-

lief, as he told Mowbray and Terrell, was that the gipsies had nothing to do with the abduction; but Terrell held firmly to his first idea.

"You are wrong, Lipsett," he said. "No one else had any motive for stealing the child. You have not found them all out, yet."

"Perhaps they've taken her across the water," said the baffled detective.

"I don't think so," replied the barrister. "They have got sly nooks and out-of-the-way hiding places—caverns and ruins—where you have no notion of following them. Never mind. The child will be discovered by some accident, in time."

"In time!" said Mowbray, savagely. "Meanwhile, she is gradually getting turned into a little gipsy. I swear I'll get up in my place in Parliament, and ask of what use our police system is, when such a thing can happen."

This threat he did not fulfil. When he had uttered it, he left Terrell and Lipsett together, and went into a place called the library. It contained a good many books, certainly—but most of them were volumes of Hansard, blue-books, works of reference. However, there was a set of Sir Walter Scott's novels; Amy Gray had discovered this, and was reading them. With a volume of *Guy Mannering* in her hand, the little sinecure governess came face to face with her master.

Amy had been thinking a good deal about her master. Simple and inexperienced as a girl may be, her natural instinct tells her when a man has that liking for her which in passionate hearts is turned to love—and which in persons of reasonable, sensible disposition is a safe basis for a matrimonial engagement. Amy saw Mr. Mowbray but little; they met at breakfast, and on Sun-

days he had a few hours to spare which he devoted to her; but she could perceive, notwithstanding his quietude of demeanour, that he had a strong liking for her. He was not a man, she thought, to feel *love*, in the poetic or romantic sense: experience of the world might have taught her that these grave self-controlled men are sometimes mastered by that passion, and give way to it more completely than others.

Conscious of the situation, Amy doubted and dreaded. Lord Waynflete seemed to have altogether passed out of her life—but she could not forget their first meeting in the railway-carriage, his grace and courteous chivalry, his pleasant talk, the language of his eyes. If he were about to put the crucial question, well did she know what would be her reply. But, she reflected, he probably had no thought of asking that question. He had merely been kindly cour-

teous to her, after all. If he wanted her he could find her; if she were a man, and loved a girl, would she not pursue her to the ends of the earth? Thus arguing with herself, the poor child thought it was her duty to forget Lord Waynflete—only she couldn't.

When she saw Mr. Mowbray enter the library, she felt a presentiment that he would put the fatal question. He, for his part, a man much worried and perplexed, felt a pleasant sensation — felt also somewhat covetous—as he saw Amy Gray's shy quiet blushful face, her drooping eyelids and tremulous little mouth. He made up his mind.

"Miss Gray," he said, "will you take a seat for a moment? I wish to speak to you."

Nobody ever sat in a dentist's chair with greater apprehension. Mowbray also sat, at

his writing-table, and paused a minute or two before he spoke. As Amy furtively watched him, looking almost sternly thoughtful, and playing with a quill, she wished herself as far away as possible—at least as far away as Ashridge.

"I do not know," he said at last, "whether you anticipate what I am about to ask you. And yet you must, I think—you ladies see more clearly than we do; I dare say you think me rather old—for you are very young—but I hope you do not think me too old to marry again."

Here he paused. Amy, seeing that he expected her to make some remark, said something quite inaudible.

"Well," said Mr. Mowbray, "let me speak frankly. Will you accept me as your husband? I cannot make love as it is done by the poets, but I am quite as much in earnest

as if I could. Do you believe me, *Amy?* Will you say yes?"

"I believe you," she answered, "of course I believe you. And you are very kind to think of me. But I am not fit—indeed I am not."

"Of that I am the best judge," replied Mowbray. "I think you perfect. You are fit to be a princess."

Ay, and if the young prince of Ashridge had asked her, do you think she would have declined, the little hypocrite? On the present occasion she was silent, and felt very much inclined to cry.

"I will not press you for an immediate answer," said Mowbray, rising from his seat and approaching her. "I must go to Manchester this evening on important business, and shall probably remain a week. That will give you time to decide."

She also had risen, and stood before him,

with her eyes cast downwards. They made a picturesque group, the stalwart resolute merchant and this shy timid girl. Mowbray took her hand and raised it to his lips, saying, "Good-bye, Amy. Think of what I have said."

He went away in high spirits, ascribing Amy's reluctancy to her bashful youth—liking her all the better for it—comparing her, much to her advantage, with many stylish girls of both Manchester and London, who had let him clearly see how gladly they would accept him—feeling confident that he should win her—building up visions of the future, with Amy always as the central figure. His horses were waiting. He rode down to the house, looking so remarkably well pleased with himself that a man who knew him said to a friend, "Hallo! look at Mowbray. He's swindled somebody."

These pleasant dreams—these amorous

aërial chateaux—lasted the merchant all the way to Manchester, which city he reached at so late an hour that, being unexpected at his own residence, he decided to sleep at the Queen's Hotel.

Amy Gray, so soon as he left her, fled away to her own room, and locked herself in, and thought—thought—thought. What should she do? Mr. Mowbray was very good, very kind, very rich; but she could not think of marrying him without a shudder, a crispation from head to foot. It was very wrong, she felt—or at least tried to feel. Then she questioned herself as to whether she should have liked Mr. Mowbray better if she had never met . . . somebody else. This was a delicate question; especially as she felt that she had no right to think about somebody else . . . who had never said a word to her that he might not have said to any other girl.

But then he had *looked*—yes, there was something indescribable in his look . . . as well as the tones of his voice. O Amy, Amy, I fear you are very far gone.

Miss Gray's reflexions that evening, and during the greater part of an almost sleepless night, were by no means satisfactory to herself. She was troubled and terrified by an offer which would have driven many young ladies into a state of ecstasy. By the morning she had made up her mind to do what most people will consider a very foolish thing—namely, to obtain if possible another situation, and to leave Prince's Gate before Mr. Mowbray's return from Manchester.

With this design she made another morning call on Miss Pinnock, on this occasion unaccompanied by Miss Cust. The paragon of preceptresses listened to as much of Amy's story as that young lady chose to tell, and

wished in her own heart that she had so good a chance of settling in the world. But she did not advise Amy to marry Mr. Mowbray, although she believed it would be good advice. Miss Pinnock had no desire to see any of her pupils in a better position than herself. And, to say truth, she was rather glad to find her *protégée* in difficulties. Nobody, according to Rochefoucauld, is altogether displeased by the misfortune of a friend.

"I *must* find a place soon, Miss Pinnock," said Amy, earnestly. "I do so want to leave before Mr. Mowbray returns."

"That seems hardly right," said the elder lady. "Perhaps, however, under the very peculiar circumstances in which you are placed, it may be permissible. You must of course explain your intentions to Miss Cust, and leave a written apology for Mr. Mowbray."

"O yes," said Amy, eagerly. "But do you know of any place, Miss Pinnock?"

"Only of one, and it is not at all like what you have had. You have been rather spoilt, you know, Amy."

"O, I will go anywhere, dear Miss Pinnock. Let me know what sort of a situation it is."

"It is with a Mrs. Gutch, dear, a widow lady who lives at Harrow. She can offer only thirty pounds, she says. There's a little girl of about twelve to teach, and a boy two years younger, who has to learn enough Latin to enter the public school. You have not forgotten your Latin, have you, Amy?"

Miss Pinnock was proud of her classical attainments, whereof she communicated a smattering to her favourite pupils.

"The salary is very small," said Amy, "but I am quite rich—Mr. Mowbray was

so liberal. And I don't very much like teaching a boy. But I think I must accept it, Miss Pinnock."

"Very well, dear. I will write at once to Mrs. Gutch, and you can go the day after to-morrow. Come to me here, and I will accompany you to the terminus."

Amy Gray took her leave, and drove home to write her letter to Mr. Mowbray. Shutting herself in her room for the purpose, she had what young ladies call "a good cry" over the state of her affairs. What Miss Pinnock had said was quite true —she was rather spoilt. Emerging into the world from that prison for innocent youth, an orphan asylum, at the very first she had entered a pleasant social stratum, and had as yet encountered few disagreeable persons or things. She could not help fearing that she was about to face a different experience.

"Gutch!" she said to herself. "What a

dreadful name! I am sure they must be unpleasant people. And then a young male Gutch who is to learn Latin. I do believe I have forgotten all the Latin I ever learnt. Let me see—

'Amo
Amas
Amat . . .'"

And then the little girl laughed through her tears at the meaning of that oft-construed verb.

"Flower o' the clove!
All the Latin I construe is Amo, I love,"

sings Fra Lippo Lippi, in Browning's delicious poem.

"Amo, amas,
I loved a lass,"

sings the schoolboy, and echo cries "Alas!" What in the world should we troubadours and romancers do without that first conjugation?

Having changed from lachrymose to laughing mood, Miss Gray regained her

courage, and made up her mind to do her duty without repining. So she wrote a very simple note to Mr. Mowbray, and then went down to tell Miss Cust of her intentions. Of course to that old lady she said nothing of Mr. Mowbray's offer, so that Miss Cust could by no means understand why she was to lose her young companion. Now, when Miss Cust was unable to understand anything—which was pretty often—she was wont to weep over it. She wept on this occasion copiously.

The fatal day came, and for the last time —as she supposed—Amy Gray entered Mr. Mowbray's superb barouche, and was driven to the institution over which Miss Pinnock presided, in order to have the advantage of that lady's escort to the terminus. It was a charming day, and Miss Pinnock was in the highest spirits, which was not exactly the case with Amy. She indeed was rather

glad to find herself in the railway-carriage, and to leave her instructress on the platform. How different, she thought, from that other railway journey, which she could never forget! On this occasion there sat opposite her a florid apoplectic gentleman—one of those opulent Philistines whom Matthew Arnold describes himself as frightening by loose talk about the fate of Briggs. Him our Amy saw not; to her vision her fellow-traveller was young and tall, with bright eyes full of mirth, and a firm well-curved mouth, only half hidden by the light moustache, and O such a gay smile, such a pleasant voice-music! With him Amy travelled to Harrow, in spirit at least—though in the body he was very far away. Heartily sorry was she when the train stopped at her station, and the beautiful vision vanished like some sky-picture of sunset.

Mrs. Gutch's house was a semi-detached

villa. Mrs. Gutch herself was a dark-haired dark-eyed little woman, voluble and apparently affectionate. She gave Amy an enthusiastic welcome, and introduced her to her pupil, and to her pupil's eldest sister. Both these young ladies were much what their mother must in her youth have been; there was a morbid prettiness and an unnatural vivacity about them. Catherine, Miss Gray's charge, did not unfavourably impress the observer; but her sister Clara, who was about twenty, at once gave one the notion of being much given to flirtation of the most pronounced kind. I don't say she gave that notion of herself to the inexperienced Amy, who was almost aghast at the affectionate familiarity with which the young lady embraced her.

"My youngest son, Clinton, is out at play somewhere," said Mrs. Gutch. "You will find him very obedient and intelligent. I

have another son living with me—he is in business in the City—you will see him this evening."

"If he comes home, mamma," said Clara, significantly.

"O, he's sure to come," whispered Catherine. "He said he wanted to see what sort of a young woman Miss Gray was."

"Be quiet, Kitty," said her sister. "Come, dear Miss Gray, let me show you your room."

Amy's first trouble was that she had to share her room with Miss Gutch. The house was small, so everybody had to pair off with somebody else—except indeed the small servant, but where she slept Miss Gray never discovered. Amy who, since she had been in Mr. Mowbray's service, had slept in the daintiest of bedrooms, and learnt the delight of isolation, now found herself "chummed" upon a young person who

turned out to be an inveterate chatterbox and a thorough slattern.

Notwithstanding what Catherine had confidentially told her sister, the eldest hope of the family, who bore the euphonious name of Grosvenor Gutch, did not arrive in time to see Miss Gray. The young ladies went to their room soon after ten—with an extremely short allowance of candle, as Clara had a habit of reading in bed.

"I hate going to bed so early," she said to Amy, when they were alone together. "Don't you? And yet there's no good in staying up in this dreary country place. We used to live at Islington, and there it was awfully jolly. But there's nobody to speak to here at Harrow."

"It is a very pretty neighbourhood, I have heard," said Miss Gray.

"Pretty enough. But I like society—don't you? I am sure you must have had

lots of sweethearts. Do tell me now. I'll tell you about mine. I'm sure you've had scores—you're just what the men like—quite an *espiègle* face, you know, and such a *jolie petite taille*, not scraggy and angular."

Miss Gutch was fond of the French language, having educated herself on French novels. Amy was perfectly amazed at this female phenomenon. Her idea of love had been formed from the poets; she was innocent of the scrofulous literature of the Lower Empire. She scarcely liked to disrobe in the presence of this audacious girl, who looked at the vulgar side of the question, and would have laughed at any other.

"O I can see you're a perfect figure," she went on; "not too thin and not too plump —the *just milieu*. If I were a man now, I should go wild about you. How I wish I were a man! They are so free—and half of them don't know how to use their freedom.

There's Grosvenor—my brother, you know; he smokes, and drinks spirits, and plays billiards; he hasn't sense enough to enjoy life properly. He won't be home perhaps till two or three; he often comes in a hansom long after the last train, and mamma always sits up for him. It's no good—she won't cure him. He's a handsome fellow, and if he had any sense could marry a woman with money."

With talk like this did Miss Clara Gutch beguile the night, long after Amy had ensconced herself in her narrow bed. Such gossip ran in her ears like the murmur of a stream, when she had dropt into a doze. At some unearthly hour she was awakened by the sound of somebody tumbling upstairs, and heard Clara say in a loud whisper,

"That's Grosvenor!"

And when next awakened, in broad daylight, it was by loud exclamations, as of some

one in agony. She sat up in bed, quite alarmed; but Miss Gutch kindly explained,

"Don't be frightened," she said. "It's only Grosvenor thrashing Clinton. He always does of a morning after he's been out late."

Amy began to think she was in the midst of a queer family. The arrangements next morning at breakfast did not alter her opinion. The meal was at eight, as Grosvenor Gutch had to go to his business in the City; Clara did not get out of bed till the last moment, and then, dispensing with ablution, went downstairs in a loose wrapper. Not till everyone else was at table did Grosvenor Gutch make his appearance—a stout young man of middle height, with bloodshot eyes, flushed face, and thick lips, wearing a quantity of tawdry jewelry. He addressed Amy with what was intended to be an air of condescending gentility, and then

began to grumble at the badness of the breakfast, and of the nuisance of having to go to the City.

"I must have some soda and brandy," he growled. "Get me some, Clara."

That young lady obediently brought what he wanted, and he took a pretty good strong dose of the spirit. Then he said:

"I've a great mind not to go town to-day. I'm not a bit up to it."

"O you had better go, Grosvenor," exclaimed his mother. "You know what Mr. Copethorne said last time."

"Hang old Copethorne! How can he expect me to work hard for such a pittance as he gives. It's starvation. I think I shall set up on my own account as a stockbroker. That's the way to make money."

In course of time this young gentleman was got off to London, and then Miss Gray and her two pupils began their work in the

back parlour, a dingy little room overlooking a square of neglected garden. No easy business was this teaching. Both children were quick, but inveterately idle: Clinton moreover was abominably mischievous. He was just the sort of boy whom the sharp discipline of a mastigophorous schoolmaster would have brought into excellent order. But at home he was master of the situation, except in his brother's presence. That brother was Mrs. Gutch's prime favourite, Clinton coming next in order. She seemed rather to dislike her daughters, but was growing rather afraid of Clara, who showed a disposition to fight for her own way.

Amy's first morning was signalized by a sensation; Master Clinton, having obtained permission to leave the room, returned with a live mouse in his pocket, and took an opportunity of letting it loose on the table. Up sprang his sister with a loud shriek, up-

setting the ink over a dozen books—and I regret to say that Amy did not preserve her equanimity. The author of the mischief screamed with laughter at the success of his exploit. In came Mrs. Gutch and Clara, attracted by the noise; and when it appeared that Catherine had upset the inkstand, her mother boxed her ears and sent her to bed. Clinton received no punishment or reprimand—but Mrs. Gutch remarked that she hoped Miss Gray would soon learn to keep order.

I am not going to trace Amy's career in this unpleasant household from day to day. It was weary work—and the people around her did not improve with acquaintance. Mrs. Gutch was always either oppressively affectionate, or sulkily distant. Clara was a great deal too affectionate and confidential at all times, and talked to Amy in a style which shocked her very much, so far as she

understood it. But Grosvenor became the greatest nuisance of all; the oaf fell in love with her, and evidently thought she ought to be grateful to him for so doing. His awkward and vulgar attentions distressed Amy, but she did not know what to do. To make matters worse, he either threw up his situation, or, more probably, was dismissed; so he was lounging about the place all day, smoking intolerable cigars, and making himself a complete nuisance to everybody except his fond mother, who could see no harm in him.

Amy can scarcely be blamed for being at this time very miserable. She had no time to herself, and the persons with whom she was compelled to associate were by no means to her taste. She found herself unable to read her favourite authors, unable to keep up her correspondence with the two or three girl-friends with whom her intimacy

had been prolonged beyond school-life. Amy was rather famous for her letters; a little school Sevigné; her sketches of life at Ashridge and in London had been considered very picturesque and piquant. If only I could have allowed her letters to tell her share in this story, it would have been far pleasanter to read. But she had neither opportunity nor inclination to narrate her Harrow experiences. Only she told Miss Pinnock that the situation was not precisely what she liked, and that she should be glad to hear of some other.

One morning, as she sat in the dull little parlour, doing her best to keep Kitty at her work, and Clinton from mischief, Clara burst into the room in a state of exuberant delight.

"O Amy!" she exclaimed, "I'm so pleased. Mamma's gone to London to see my sister Jane, who is ill. She says she

shall come back to-night, but I know she won't—she never does when she gets to Jenny's. Come along; give those brats a holiday, and we'll go and take a walk."

To Clara's unfeigned astonishment, Miss Gray declined to do anything of the sort. But the brats took the law into their own hands, and resolutely refused to do any work. Clinton commenced proceedings with a wild hurrah, then turned a somersault, upsetting with his heels the rather rickety table; then seized an unfortunate cat that suspected no mischief, and hurled it out of window. As for Kitty, she quietly made her way to the pantry, whence presently she emerged in triumph with a pot of jam.

"You see," said Miss Gutch, laughing, "your authority is gone. Kitty will eat jam all day, and you won't see anything more of Clinton. So you may just as well

dress and come for a walk with me."

Amy was not at all pleased with the idea. She would rather have remained at home in quiet—but quiet was a thing unattainable in the neighbourhood of Clara Gutch. So she reluctantly consented, and the two girls went to their room to dress. They turned out in very different style. Amy liked good materials and quiet colours, and had been in the habit of employing a skilful dress-maker. Clara, on the other hand, went in for showy tints, and either made her own dresses, or went to an inferior artist. They made their way across pleasant fields toward Greenford, Clara chatting incessantly all the way, and Amy enjoying the fresh brisk air, which of late she had seldom tasted sufficiently. She had learnt to love that open air —unknown to her in the imprisonment of her childhood—upon the beech-clad slopes above the Ashe and the Petteril. As she

tripped along the meadow-path, her companion's busy voice sounded faintly in her ears, almost like the murmur of those two beloved streams—and there was a moisture in her sweet blue eyes—the madid lustre of joy. Poor child! she was happy for half an hour or so.

Suddenly, however, Clara's voice rising into an exclamation aroused her from her day-dream. She looked up, and beheld, jauntily sitting on a stile which they were approaching, and smoking the eternal cigar, the elegant Grosvenor Gutch. He jumped up with alacrity, exclaiming——

"Dear me, young ladies, this *is* a pleasure!"

CHAPTER VI.

WHITSUNTIDE.

IT has often occurred to me that one would very much like to know under what conditions a great writer—or even a favourite writer—produced his work. Where, for example, was Homer when he hit upon that delightful idea of Nausikaa—questionless the most charming thing in his poems? Where was Aristophanes, when he made the nightingale sing so divinely in the *Birds?* Had Homer been supping with Laertes? Had the great Athenian been at a Club dinner with his friend and opponent Alcibiades? To talk of later business; where

did Shakespeare write of Hamlet—his second self? Was it at the Mermaid tavern, or on the banks of the Avon at Stratford? Where was Milton when he wrote *Comus?* The *Hamlet* and the *Comus* are the typical productions of those two famous Englishmen; the dramatist embodied his own character in the Prince of Denmark; born in a time that was out of joint, he did his best to set it right. He failed, as far as the immediate time was concerned. Not however as to the future. If England should ever become a great nation—which, in spite of the self-flattery that has grown to an epidemic in our modern literature is, I think, quite possible—Shakespeare will have done it. As to Milton's *Comus*, it is the most magnificent argument conceivable in favour of asceticism. Asceticism is absurd, but it is a favourite folly of the extreme religious, not to go beyond the limits of Christianity,

it suits alike the ultramontane Papist and the plusquam-Wesleyan Methodist. I suspect Milton wrote *Comus* after having a little exceeded the moderate limits of sensuous enjoyment which he set down for himself.

> He who of those delights can judge, and spare
> To interpose them oft, is not unwise.

Dear old boy! I like his elegant moralizing; but that certes is not the stuff whereof great poets are made.

One would be glad to know exactly how Coleridge caught the unique and delicious idea of Christabel. Somewhere in the Lakes, depend on it; that wild yet lovely poetry has in it the terror of Wastwater, the witchery of Windermere. Where was Scott when he thought of Meg Merrilies and Dominie Sampson? Where Thackeray, when there came upon him the marvellous conception of Becky Sharp? Where Disraeli, when he

hit on St. Aldegonde, most *ennuyé* and eccentric of dukelings—or Gaston Phœbus, the audacious Aryan artist, with a sublime contempt for *Genesis?* Where again was Charles Dickens, when he imagined the stolid shoulders and huge haunches of the elephantine idiotic Honeythunder—or caught the sweet echoes of Rosa Bud's school-girl coquetry? Where?

Well, in case I should ever become as famous as the very least of the men I have mentioned, it is my present design to describe myself at the writing of this current chapter. It is Whitmonday—or, as I am told I ought to put it, Whitsun Monday. It really does not matter to me, as I am quite uninformed as to the origin of the apparently heathen festival. Knowing that it is in London a time of noise, I unwisely pitched my tent in a country village, sparsely inhabited. I got a bow-windowed

room at a pleasant little inn called the "Five Horseshoes." Never was pleasanter rustic room than that in which I ensconced myself on Whitsunday: the pink of cleanliness, the divine fragrance of lavender (which always, somehow, reminds me of my grandmother), the view up and down a rather populous road, and across it to a beautiful hill-common, crowned with an aerial group of a dozen trees, and gray where sand was dug, and yellow where furze was in blossom. To the left an ugly little church which an eager parson was improving into greater ugliness: to the right a village-shop, where groups of gossipers congregated from morn to dewy eve.

My landlord, a vast and "orbicular," but somewhat surly and stolid man—my landlady, a woman of a type clearly better than her position—did, in their respective ways, their utmost to make me comfortable. Even

the barmaid, a dressy but well-behaved little person, with a taste for flirtation, but no accurate knowledge of the art, seemed anxious to secure my satisfaction. *Bien.* I thought it would be signally enjoyable. I had been to the Derby, won an unexpected lot of coin on Kingcraft (having backed him because I have Cornish proclivities), and was in the humour to do some easy writing. And it struck me that I had come to the very place to do it tranquilly. So I supped on some excellent cold beef and bitter beer, smoked just one cigar, and went to bed at midnight, prepared to enjoy about nine hours dreamless sleep.

What happened? What is happening? I awoke from what I conceived to be the —quintessence, shall I say?—no, the cent-essence of nightmare. There was a noise outside my window such as you may hear from a Great British hustings at a contested

election, or very early on a Saturday morning when all the vegetables in the world are decanted into Covent Garden, while their carriers and custodians curse cacophonously. It was just after sunrise—I saw the huge round disc rising laboriously above the rim of the hill, as if it had done the business many times too often. Delicious fragrance of innumerable honeysuckle blooms welcomed me as I looked out of my window; but even that keen odour was soon vanquished by the stench of hideous tobacco. Multitudinous gipsies were making arrangements of tent and booth; not high caste men like Black Jack Johnson, but inferior fellows who live by minor arts. Among the gipsies, as among the Jews, there are grades—the man who implores your man-servant to sell him your old trowsers is neither a Rothschild nor a Disraeli. These are the gipsies—these fellows whom I see below—

who would turn pale beneath their swarthy skins if you abruptly exclaimed *Gorgio avella.* Country louts (of both sexes) are also growing numerous—the men with radiant rosettes in their coats, the women in the gayest of cheap finery. What does it all mean?

I wrap myself in a dressing-gown, draw my chair to the open window, light a cigar. Early as it is, the world is astir. I remember now to have heard or read that Whit Monday is the great rural festival. Clearly the whole shire has taken holiday, and intends to congregate in and about the Five Horseshoes, to the intense delight of its stout and surly landlord. Already, though it is what civilization calls the middle of the night, the surly yet satisfied landlord has to serve thirsty customers with ginger-beer and fourpenny ale. I reflect, in no cynical mood yet somewhat savagely, on the utter

hideousness and discomfort of the Englishman's holiday. In France or Italy, on a day of festival, the labourer drinks wholesome wine from a goblet of clear glass, and listens to the music of the violin, and watches the girls dancing gaily on the green. In England the rustic drinks a fearful liquid called beer from a hideous mug: even Dives would not have cared to abate his thirst by imbibing such nauseous poison. Mr. Cayley says it is the fault of the malt-tax. If so, by all means hang the Chancellor of the Exchequer; if not, it might be a good plan to hang a few dozen brewers, a few hundred publicans. Not however my surly landlord: no rope in the county would bear his weight.

The noise increases. The crowd thickens. Clearly this is a centre of concourse. I smoke cigar after cigar, and watch the humours of the scene. By-and-by however

it occurs to me that I should like some breakfast; and, after ringing the bell a good many times, up comes the dressy little barmaid, in a costume of elegance extreme. She expects to see some of her sweethearts, evidently. My confabulation with her has an unsatisfactory result; there is clearly no chance of anything to eat for some time; all the rooms below are occupied, and all the servants are desperately engaged. I tell the little girl it doesn't matter—which is true—and she trips away to look after her sweethearts.

It doesn't matter, as I said. I am an old campaigner, and never go unprovided. I go to my portmanteau and extract therefrom a Perigord pie, some biscuits, and a flask of Maraschino, and manage to make as good a breakfast as anybody in the neighbourhood. Having done this, I am ready for anything that may happen—but evidently I

am not predestined to write much of my story this day.

Faith! what a story a man could write if he knew all about this ever-increasing crowd below! That little barmaid has her romance, of course—just the sort of romance for the authoress of *Red as a Rose is She* to work into absorbing chapters. Two lovers hath she, I hear—and in the course of the day I see them. One is an awful swell, dressed in light attire of the same colour throughout, with an exotic in his button-hole, and the possessor of a drab beard of exquisite culture. The other is a young fellow with a stoop in his shoulder, a somewhat dirty hue of linen and fingers, who, having drunken beer, offers no payment, but says to the landlord—

"Set it down, Billy!"

Not altogether amiably, the orbicular landlord sets it down. I peruse these two young

men—I make innocent inquiries. I learn that the gentleman in gay attire, with that marvellous drab beard, in which dust and sunshine seem to mingle, is somebody's head gardener —and a much greater swell than his master. I learn that his rival is the younger son of a neighbouring squire, and has but one wish in the world, one over-mastering passion—to be a god-like blacksmith, a master of the forge. He has not altogether the mighty muscle of our friend Hephaistos; but he may possibly share his inexhaustible fertility of device. Were I the Squire his father, blacksmith he should be. As to the little lass, I don't pretend to guess whether she prefers the fosterer of flowers or the smiter of steel.

In this hubbub, can I write? Certes, no. My conscience is free: the subtlest casuist would admit that. I make my way out of doors, elbowing many louts in their best clothing, clamorous already for beer and

ginger-beer, and driving the surly landlord wild. He is not an imaginative man, and has not learnt to vary his oaths. I stroll into the road. On the right I see a quiet little demesne—turf of emerald, circles and lozenges of brilliant floral colour, deep cool shade of a lime avenue, red chestnuts burning their cones away in the sunlight, dogs asleep lazily, a cottage half-picturesque and half-grotesque, a table spread upon the lawn for late breakfast, a tall fellow lounging under the foliage, reading the *Times*. I suppose he is waiting for his wife to come down. She, doubtless, having emerged from her bath like Aphrodite from the keen sea water, fresh and fragrant, is putting the last artistic touch to the coils of her abundant hair. Ay, and here she comes, in a snowy summer costume, touched with violets—and her servant maiden, a Lydia or a Phillis, trips gaily after with comestibles—and a

long flask of Rhine wine is opened . . . .

What right have I to pry into their privacy? I go to the top of the hill, and assume the position of a *Spectator ab extra.* "Three throws a penny" is the cry among the gipsies; Mrs. Sidney is their leader, with a scarlet kerchief for her head-dress. The dressy little barmaid, evidently having for some reason or other obtained a holiday on the busiest day of the year, has positively established herself in my bow-windowed bedroom, and is trying to look charming.

The fun grows fast and furious. Mrs. Sidney, queen of a minor horde of the Romany race, attracts all the muscular louts of the vicinage. All the little imps of the neighbourhood are blowing penny trumpets. Presently comes a band—a volunteer band, of course—the pride of the nearest town. Its blatant brass and the thunderous thump of its drum are perfectly magnificent. It

plays no tune to speak of, but this I believe is the perfection of modern music. Tunes are childish: all you want is a harmony—that is to say, a series of utterly unconnected sounds which do not involve an idea. I have noticed the same theory very often at work in literature. It suits the clever fellow who has no genius. I think there ought to be a limited liability company for the suppression of ideas.

The brass band plays horribly. The church bell—there is but one, and it is cracked—begins to ring. The louts with radiant rosettes form into procession, following a splendid banner of blue and gold. The parson awaits them at the ugly little church. I am disposed to bet two to one that his text will be "two are better than one;" 'tis the favourite club text. Shall I go to church? I think not. It has never occurred to me that Monday is a good day

for going to church. No: I will remain on the summit of the hill, and smoke, and criticize.

I remain. I smoke. I criticize. I decide that after all human nature is much the same everywhere. Flirtation—most charming of all the feminine arts—is very successfully practised in this remote country village. Simpler in its forms, it is still the same process. Every little servant girl, eleventh housemaid of some heavy swell who has made a fortune by black lead or washing-powder, comes back to her native village as complete a coquette as if she was a Countess. These girls! They are all alike—from chignon to ankle, from princess to sempstress. They bring airs and graces from the unaccustomed servants' hall, and amaze the young louts who were their wooers heretofore. It is usually held that the difference between human beings and the inferior ani-

mals (as they are styled by a *petitio principii*) is, that the former possess reason, while the latter possess only instinct. *Deus est anima brutorum.* Two points are worth considering in this matter. First, is instinct inferior to reason? While these girls are flirting, these male idiots drinking poisonous ale, the boys blowing penny whistles, or exploding crackers, or shying "three sticks a penny" for cocoa nuts, I see some exquisite birds, purple on the back, white on the breast, swift and graceful on the wing, making their nests under the eaves of the Five Horseshoes. The howl and yell and stench of the unfragrant and cacophonous crowd below disturb them not. They float easily in the air; their twitter is musical; they have come straight hither, over thousands of miles of sea and land, back to the very place where they built last year. This is the most familiar and affectionate of the swallow tribe,

"the temple-haunting martlet." The orbicular landlord, courting ill-luck, will probably have their nests pulled down. Myriad poets have written of the swallow, but, though I recollect both the pseudo-Anacreon and Miss Alfred, verily I will rhyme myself:

O SWALLOW, flying by windy ways
  Over leagues of white sea-foam,
To the nest you left in the autumn days
  Under eaves of an English home—
Voyage right swiftly, wandering bird,
  A speck in the distant blue,
For the pulse of life in the leaves is stirred,
    And white doves coo.

Have you wintered away in the Cyclades
  Or on marge of mysterious Nile?
No matter, so that the summer sees
  You back in our western isle.
But come, more swift than the sailing ship,
  For the skies are calm and clear,
And I long to see your brown wing dip
    In stream and mere.

Yes, I long for the magic of indolent hours,
  The glamour of amorous eyes,
When the breeze which fluttered 'mid fern and flowers
  In the noon's rich languor dies,
When bees grow drowsy in honey-bells,
  And the brown lark sleeps in his nest,
And a vernal vision of gladness swells
    One soft white breast.

Yes, I long to float on a haunted lake,
And the weary past forget,
And the thirst of my restless heart to slake
With the songs of Amoret.
So, hither, swallow, from Memphian fane,
Or Greek isle set in the blue:
Fly fast to your English home again—
Love comes with you.

Ah, no human language can echo the liquid music of the swallow's amorous note. This is digression. I was reasoning about instinct. I think swift Procne somewhat superior to my stolid surly landlord, to my dressy simpering barmaid, to the dull block-head who muddles his brain with fourpenny ale outside.

But there is another point. Can you draw this line between reason and instinct with any definiteness or certainty? These quasi-human animals I see around me—have those in trowsers anything beyond an instinct for intoxicating liquid?—those in petticoats (more or less gaudy) anything be-

yond an instinct for the opposite sex? I doubt it. They are mere animals, and, for the most part, very inferior animals. My friend Adrian's chosen comrade, the Pyrenean wolf-hound, has more brain than half this village.

What is the use of educating such people? The result is that they read *Paul Clifford*, *Jack Sheppard*, *Eugene Aram*, and the *Police Gazette*. They see how some vile blackguard has murdered a venerable clergyman and his housekeeper, or a whole family, including a young girl just about to marry, and they grow emulous of the murderer. When Pope (was it?) remarked that

> "A little learning is a dangerous thing:
> Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring,"

he saw only half the truth. The fact is that knowledge is like wine; it inebriates feeble brains. Even Lord Macaulay had too much education for his intellect. The best fate

that can happen to nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand is to know but little, and to do what they are told. A man may get drunk on the *Saturday Review* or the *Police Gazette* as easily as on beer. Such were my reflections as I watched these fellows taking their pleasure with a kind of violent seriousness.

* * * * * *

Then I walked away some four miles to my beloved river, the Thames—which I know intimately from Lechlade to the Nore, inch by inch—which, wherever I come upon it, whether narrow and vivacious in its upper reaches, or wide and imperial below the many bridges of London, always meets me like an old friend. And I hired a boat, and dropped down the stream beneath the woods of Bisham, and thought of Shelley, who wrote *The Revolt of Islam* on those very reaches of the Thames. I

smoked; I angered the swans, who were just leading out their young flotillas of dusky cygnets. I startled the herons, who were fishing in stately fashion, and rose rapidly into the sunny air, a marvellous mixture of purple and gray-green. I felt lonely in my indolence, and envious of my tall friend on the cottage-lawn . . . and so I became melancholy and lyrical. Behold the result:

Sweet, sweet, with the fairy feet,
  Hasten down to the river-side,
Where the lilies float, and thy lover's boat
  Waits for thee on the rippling tide—
    Waits for thee,
    While on meadow and tree
  Magical sunset lights fall free.

Now, sweet flower, for a happy hour,—
  Thames beneath and the sky above:
Swiftly trip—there's an eager lip
  Waits for thine with the thirst of love—
    Waits for thine,
    While a breeze divine
  Ruffles the darkening woodland line.

Sad, though sweet, on the lawns to meet
By tranquil Thames—for a voice of fear
Whispereth that the angel Death
Waits for thee in some far-off year—
Waits for thee—
And our trysting tree
Other lovers shall often see.

Wherefore haste, nor a moment waste
Of young love's exquisite golden days:
Dream not of night when an hour's delight
Waits for thee in the sunset haze—
Waits for thee
As the summer sea
For the river flowing by lawn and lea.

Alas! all this waiting came to nothing in my case. How should it, when the lady of the song was leagues away, and could by no means conjecture that I was dreaming of her on the waters of Thames? I have no magnetic power, whereby to compel the attendance of a maiden who is in another county. So I made the best of my loneliness, and went back to dine at Medmenham. It was before the owner of Danesfield had pulled down the old inn.

* * * * * *

The row had not ceased when I reached the "Five Horseshoes." They were dancing in the club-room . . . Sir Roger de Coverley apparently . . . at anyrate, something rapid and noisy. Outside the inn, the intoxicated lout was using hideous language. A wretched unwillingness or incapacity to think runs through the English people. The lower classes, eager to be eloquent, use horrible phrases, which I cannot here reproduce: they are stereotyped with them. Equally stereotyped is the slang of the upper classes . . . the "awfully jolly" and "deuced nice" of the languid swell. I should like to get swell and lout together, and insist on their exchanging ideas.

Hideous outcry, horrible blasphemy, atrocious obscenity—such are the chief characteristics of the holiday-keeping peasants this evening. With the utmost wish to believe

in rural innocence, I am compelled to admit that the language I hear could scarcely be paralleled in Whitechapel or Wapping. The dregs of a great city are very vile, no doubt; but I regret to say that here in the quiet country, where everything is beautiful and peaceful, where odour of honeysuckle fills the air, the human animal seems quite as debased and degraded. Where is the remedy? My theory is . . . individualism. Instead of attempting to benefit your fellow-creatures, which is the fashionable fancy of the day, do as much as possible to improve yourself. Charity begins at home—and so do most other things. Leave the folly and wickedness of the world to be dealt with by politicians and philanthropists; for yourself, mind your own business, and get as much enjoyment out of life as possible. Such is my theory—at least this evening. Odour of bad tobacco, and uproar of evil voices,

are surely sufficient excuse for my selfishness. I come down here to write in peace —and all my senses are outraged—and I am unable to write at all. However, by this time the dressy little barmaid has vacated my room (whereat I rejoice) and I can lock myself in, and think. Often have I found that external hubbub stimulates the brain of the lonely thinker. Many of our most brilliant leading articles are written within hearing of the throbbing pulsations of the steam-press. What a grand essay on "the Great Metrolopus" Mr. Sala might produce if he were shut up for a few days in the clock chamber of Saint Paul's! How his sonorous sentences would echo the roar of Ludgate Hill below, the boom of the mighty bell above!

It must, I think, have been about three o'clock when the last bucolic wave receded, and quiet reigned at the "Five Horse-

shoes." I had smoked so many cigars and made so many reflexions, that my brain was only too wide awake; wherefore, when obviously the festivities had ended, I took a dose of hydrate of chloral—in order to secure sleep. Even that felicitous hypnotic failed at first, for the tremendous snore of the large landlord seemed to shake the house. But in time I tumbled to sleep, and entered the happy avenues of Dreamland!

I was destined to wake early. The sunrise came over the green slope of the hill; the shafts of Apollo Ekaergos made their way through blinds and curtains and eyelids. Does the sun create the human eye—or does the eye create the sun? The latter, I think. Any way, they belong to each other; they are the opponent poles of a cycle; if there were no eyes, the sun would cease to exist. Q.E.D.

Looking out upon the dusty road, where

potsherds and orange-peel and shells of the cocoanut bear witness to yesterday's dissipation, what do I see? The gardener with the dusty beard, as fresh as paint in his light suit of clothes, and with a fresh flower in his buttonhole. He is an early wooer, verily. I hope he looked after his flowers before starting. I hope the barmaid has had time to arrange her tresses and make her toilet.

"The healthy-wealthy-wise affirm
That early birds obtain the worm . . .
The worm rose early too."

Why shouldn't it?

CHAPTER VII.

BLACK JACK JOHNSON IN SPAIN.

BACK to Ashridge Manor. Again a breakfast scene. Only the Marquis and Marchioness, Adrian and Lady Mary. Lily Lechmere is looking for a lover, or at least a husband, elsewhere, having discovered that Lord Waynflete is not within her reach. Where is Fane the indolent and insouciant? He is gone to Damascus; he declares that in the atmosphere of England there is too much iron and coal, product of railways and factories, for a lazy man to inhale; he is smoking his narghilly in a marble court, where many fountains murmur, where

multitudinous roses bloom. Fortunate Epicurean!

"Adrian," said the Marquis, when the Marchioness and her daughter had left the breakfast-room, "I want you to start on a rather difficult expedition. I have heard from your uncle Oliver, concerning whose wild career I, who know very little, know more than anybody else. He tells me that he is dying of disease of the heart, and has made up his mind to die where he is."

"And where is he?"

"In the heart of the Pyrenees, at a place called Vauvert—a village, I suppose. Here's his letter—written in French, you see—he tells me it is but a few miles from *le cirque de Gavarnie et la brèche de Roland.* There he is, with his daughter——"

"His daughter!"

"O yes. He has married once at least in the course of his wild career—and he tells

me he has a daughter. Now if Oliver is right, and he really is dying, you'll have to take charge of this cousin of yours, and bring her home. She's a wild creature, I suspect. What we shall do with her I can't guess."

"Do you know her age?"

"I haven't the remotest idea: he calls her his *petite fille*. I daresay she will make a good playfellow for Mary."

I think Lord Waynflete felt far greater satisfaction in starting for the Pyrenees than he would have had in going up to town as member for Rothcastle. He made his arrangements rapidly; his sole companion was to be Big Dog, who, being of Pyrenean extraction, might be expected to enjoy a visit to the mountains of his birth. Of course Waynflete paid a farewell visit to Métivier, who surprised him by a familiar knowledge of the Pyrenees.

"I was there fifty years ago," said the recluse. "I know that village of Vauvert; though the name is French, it is on the Spanish side, and has a most startling situation. It is on a kind of ledge or terrace; above it there are woods of oak, and below a perpendicular precipice. 'Tis a favourite haunt of gipsies, who are beyond the reach of the alcalde on that mountain-side. You will certainly find some of that wandering race at Vauvert."

I need not follow Lord Waynflete and Big Dog step by step to Vauvert. Imagine them across the Channel, beyond railways, amid picturesque mountain villages, where the inns were small and smoky, the food furiously flavoured with garlic, the wine tasting of the leathern skins in which it is kept. But before I bring my travellers to the end of my journey, a word concerning the career of Lord Oliver Waynflete. He

and the present Marquis were the only children of their house, and he inherited a vast property from a great-uncle. He was born with a wild temper, which had caused some trouble both at school and at the University. When he came of age and inherited his estates, he determined to see the world. He saw it. For years he wandered over sea and land. He traversed both continents; he explored Central Asia, Central Africa, Central America; he crossed Australia from south to north; he was one of the few who have seen the statues upon Easter Island. All the while his communications with his family were rare and brief; and as nobody else (except his agent and banker) knew anything of his movements, he was not made an Honorary Member of the Travellers', or a Fellow of the Royal Geographical. For the rest, he was an eater of haschish, a smoker of opium, a believer in mesmerism,

and in the identity of all religions. He talked innumerable languages, and seldom put pen to paper except to sign a cheque.

Adrian Lord Waynflete and his canine comrade had reached a French village which was said to be five leagues from Vauvert. Somewhat late they arrived at *La Croix d'Or*, and Adrian was glad to stretch his legs beside a mighty fire in a large low kitchen, and to hear from his hostess that he could have a capon and an omelet for supper. While supper was preparing, in came the curé, whom gossip had informed of the appearance of a foreign-looking tourist in the village. This was an event: Père Larçay, a priest of uncommon intelligence, was delighted to see a stranger. And an Englishman too: the English traverse beaten tracks, flattened into monotony, where the inns are always provided with Worcester sauce and pale ale. You may see them at Pau, at Bagnères de

Bigorre, at Bagnères de Luchon—but they seldom deviate into fresh country. Adrian, delighted to find an intelligent companion, asked the curé to sup with him.

"Yes, yes, with pleasure," he exclaimed, briskly. "Wait but a moment, Monsieur. I will return."

Adrian fancied he had gone to make some alteration in his dress—not at all. Back he came in five minutes, with two long-necked bottles beneath his arm, a boy carrying two more—they were magnums of Champagne.

"I am from Champagne, Monsieur," he said, in explanation. "I cannot drink the wine of the country. You English gentlemen love Champagne, I know. Jeannette," —this to the hostess, a rosy rotund woman of about thirty-five—"plenty of mushrooms with the capon . . . and my favourite sauce."

Thanks to this sacerdotal epicure, Adrian made a capital supper. The talk was lively.

The priest seldom saw a newspaper, and was about a year behind the world.

"I wish," he said, "you English would explore the Pyrenees; then we should have hotels, society, life. But no, our passes lead nowhere; who wants to go into Aragon? The Alps lead to Italy. But we have finer hills than in the Alps—hills covered with forests—and then in winter there are the wolves. That fine fellow is a wolf-dog, I see."

"Yes, but I believe he has never seen a wolf."

"Ah, then he is like a priest who has never fought with the devil," said Larçay, laughing. "And you are going to Vauvert?"

"Yes. Can I get there easily?"

"O, it is a charming journey. May I go a part of the way with you? There is a beautiful wild place I should like to show you—two leagues from here—a lake in the crater of a volcano."

"I shall be delighted," said Lord Waynflete; and so it was arranged.

Facile drinking is the flashing foam of Champagne: they twain finished three magnums easily—with supper and the subsequent smoke. True, Jeannette put her pouting lips to a goblet, and drank a third of it, and professed to be shocked at her own temerity. When the curé rose to go home, there was still a mighty bottle left on the massive wooden table.

"It will refresh you in the morning, Monsieur," he said.

"A sagacious priest," thought Adrian, as he returned to the fire, and filled one more pipe. While they supped and chatted they had not been alone; the kitchen, a large one, was occupied by several groups of muleteers and peasants; but, as the hour grew late, these had gradually retired. There was one man left—a tall fellow, whom

Adrian had slightly noticed; when they were alone together, this person came forward, and addressed him by name. Lord Waynflete, occupied with his pipe and his meditations, looked up suddenly, but did not recognise him.

"Have you forgot Jack Johnson, my lord?" asked the formidable gipsy.

Adrian was surprised.

"What in the world has brought you here, Johnson?" he asked.

"Do you know, my lord, when I came in this evening, and saw you and the priest enjoying your supper, I very nearly took the freedom to ask you that same question. As for me, I come here pretty often. I've got some pals at Vauvert, where I heard you say you were going to-morrow; and I'm bound to the fair at Cordova, to buy horses."

"You're a queer fellow, Johnson. Come, fill your pipe, and we'll open that last

bottle, which the priest told me to drink to-morrow morning. Do you sleep here?"

"Yes, my lord. I was going back to Vauvert—only came in to get some brandy—but when I saw you I thought I'd stay. I can show you over the hills when the priest leaves you. I shall sleep in the hay-tallat."

"Do you often go to Cordova to buy horses? It quite surprises me. I didn't think you gipsies did business on so large a scale."

"Uncommon fine wine, your lordship," said Johnson, with gusto gulping a glassful. "That priest is what I call a good Samaritan. As to what you say about business, why it's the march of civilization. One of my pals goes about the country with a photograph cart, and takes the likenesses of people and their houses, and gets a good living out of popular vanity. And there's

a nephew of mine has turned to taking out teeth and cutting corns—he's got a light hand—for I brought him up to riding young colts and fillies—and it's astonishing how fond the ladies are of having him operate. You see, my lord, what they call the spread of intelligence has reached us Romans, and we're moving on like the rest of the world."

"Quite right," replied Adrian. "Now, where shall I see you to-morrow?"

"When the priest leaves you, I'll join you, my lord. I shall be on the road before you are—so I'll wait and smoke a pipe till you come."

He kept his word. Adrian and his clerical comrade started in gay spirits, exhilarated by the fresh ozone of the mountains. They were off soon after sunrise, while yet the peaks to the left were tipped with crimson, and long shafts of light—the true arrows of Apollo Ekaërgos—pierced the mists that

a western breeze had brought over from the Bay of Biscay. The curé was full of gay chat, and burst at intervals into a chanson as gay. As the lark arose high above them, he burst forth with

Je suis, je suis le cri de joie
Qui sort des prés à leur réveil ;
Et c'est moi que la terre envoie
Offrir un salut au soleil.

And then he would ask pardon for singing, and say that it was the fault of his birth-place—Aï, where the very wine laughs. And again the irrepressible song was heard—

L'Aï brillait, et ma jeune mâitresse
Chantait les dieux dans la Grèce oubliés :
Nous comparions notre France à la Grèce,
Quand un pigeon vint s'abattre à nos pieds.

By-and-by they reached the volcanic lake. Yes, it was a true crater : when the summit was attained, there lay beneath a mighty amphitheatre, with sloping walls of virgin turf a couple of hundred feet in depth, and at the bottom the mysterious lake—calm,

limpid, strangely transparent. Adrian uttered an exclamation of delight—so unique and unexpected was the scene. Fringes of boxwood grew here and there upon the emerald slope—as you see it on Box Hill in Surrey, or on the side of the Chiltern Beacon; but the trees were larger and finer, and would supply materials for the balls and mallets of croquet so long as there are any curates left to play that innocent game.

They sat on the soft turf and began to smoke—which is now the natural way to enjoy fine scenery. For some time even the most loquacious of curés was silent: at last he said—

"What do you think of it?"

"It is strangely beautiful. Has the lake been fathomed?"

"They say it is unfathomable. But I don't know who would try it, for some-

times, without any warning, its water boils, and is thrown up an immense height. This will happen, it is said, if a boat is placed upon it. I should not like to try."

"You would be a new Empedocles," said Lord Waynflete. "But what is that?"

It was Big Dog. Seeing that his master meant to rest, he cantered off for a ramble; and when he had thoroughly heated himself, the pure water of the lake tempted him. In he sprang—there he was, swimming in the treacherous abyss. But the subterranean powers spared him—he swam ashore without awakening their anger—much to Adrian's relief.

The Pyrenean's adventures were not over. Five minutes later he was seen in full chase of some animal almost as big as himself. The course this creature took was along the steep slope that surrounded the lake: it was difficult ground for both pursuer and pursued.

"It is a wolf!" exclaimed the curé. "It is the mad wolf—the *loup-garou !*"

They sprang to their feet—the chase drew nearer—the wolf made straight towards them, a hideous hirsute brute, with foaming mouth wherein mighty fangs were visible. Suddenly he saw two human beings within a few yards of him—stopped—turned at once on his pursuer. Big Dog sprang straight at his throat. They rolled over each other in fierce conflict.

Adrian, who had wisely brought a revolver, ran towards them as fast as the slippery turf would let him. But before he could reach the spot Jack Johnson came from behind a rock close by.

"Don't shoot!" he cried, and threw himself on the combatants, and plunged a long keen blade into the wolf's shoulder. Big Dog got up, and shook himself, and came to his master to be praised.

"Which had the best of it, Johnson?" asked Adrian.

"The dog, my lord. He'd have killed the wolf in time, but then he might have got hurt himself. The brute has got some of his fur between his teeth now."

The wolf was quite dead, and Johnson set deliberately to work to skin it. The curé was in a state of extreme delight: this huge male wolf had been the chief of a pack that terrified his villagers all through the winter. No man dared be out after sunset —which greatly interfered with the business done by plump Jeanette at the *Croix d'Or:* and as for women and children, they scarce stirred out at all. Even when you are safe in bed in a Pyrenean village, a thrill of horror goes through you at hearing the long fierce howl of a pack of wolves, driven to desperation by the starving snowstorm. Big Dog's monster opponent bore the repute

of being a *loup-garou*, or wehr-wolf, a man transformed to a brute by shameful sorcery; it would be good news in the village when his death was announced. The curé was in raptures.

"That's a good blade of yours," said Adrian, taking up Jack Johnson's dagger. It was about eighteen inches long, with two edges—on the steel was an inscription in the Arabic character.

"It's from Toledo, my lord. They temper them in the Tagus, and polish them on wheels of walnut wood. If the strongest arm in the world struck that knife against a stone wall, it wouldn't blunt the point or splinter the blade."

Having taken leave of the friendly curé, and faithfully promised to taste his Champagne on his return, Lord Waynflete left the borders of the magic lake, and, accompanied by the gipsy, pursued his journey.

Black Jack strode along in triumph, with the bloody wolf-skin over his arm.

"Our people will cure this skin for you, my lord. It will do for a rug for the dog to sleep on," said Johnson.

For a few miles they traversed a winding pass, with steep hills on each side. By-and-by they emerged on the other side of the chain, and came upon a natural terrace of rock, thousands of feet above the populous plain. An eagle suddenly floated from his eyry, within rifle-shot, and shrieked defiance as he swooped earthwards. The wide country, with its sinuous streams and scattered towns, lay like a map beneath the eye. Spain lay below. Adrian was constrained to sit on a ledge of rock, and fill his meerschaum, and meditate on his first view of Spain. We have all been students of Salamanca in our time; we have all defied duennas and cudgelled corregidors; we have

all had our castles in Spain. Ay, but there it was, the marvellous romantic realm—the real country, no longer a mere dream; the land that gave birth to the Cid, and launched the Armada, and created Don Quixote and Sancho Panza; the land of Moorish architecture, Castillian pride, Andalusian beauty—not to mention Seville oranges, and Barcelona nuts.

"Vauvert is just below, my lord," quoth Black Jack, by-and-by. "We can't see it for the trees."

They began to descend. Presently the gipsy said,

"My lord, do you remember that young lady that used to be at Squire Mowbray's, teaching his little girl?"

Did he remember? That this gipsy should suddenly recall Amy Gray to him, just as he had entered Spain! Had not one of his most delightful Spanish castles

been built for her occupancy? Not at once did he answer the gipsy, for he fell into a reverie. He had a sudden vision of Amy: his fancy conjured up the ravishing curves of her form, the living light of her lovely eyes. Events of one sort and another had followed so fast that his thoughts had been distracted from Amy. You see he had hardly made up his mind, and so he let other matters take precedence of his light love-fancy. But now it came upon him with a keen pang, that perhaps he had lost her; perhaps by this time she had engaged herself to Mowbray, or to somebody else. What right had he, who had never uttered word of love to her, to expect that she would love him? He laughed a Sardian laugh at his own absurdity. Certainly she was for him the only girl in the world. She haunted him, and he couldn't tell why. His memory brought her back to him, per-

fect as a picture; he could see the dimples about her mouth as she smiled, and the peculiar arch of her eyebrow; he could see the pretty piquant movement of her wrist and hand. Why, no other creature ever moved with such grace, ever had a voice so silver-sweet. He would get this business over as soon as he could, and fly back to England on the wings of love.

Hang it, though, he couldn't kill his uncle before his time. He might be kept at Vauvert for weeks. The idea made him angry, and recalled him from his pleasant reverie.

"Well," he said to Johnson, sharply, "what of that young lady? How did you know her?"

"I often saw her, my lord, with the child that was lost, when I came Ashridge way. But the last time I saw her was a little way out of London, in the fields between Greenford and Perivale. I was ly-

ing in a hedge, waiting for a pal with some horses; and first a young fellow came up, one of those flabby chaps that serve in shops, only dressed as if he was out for a holiday; and after he'd waited some time, smoking a cigar made of stale cabbage leaf, this young lady came along the path—and there was another with her, that didn't look quite so much a lady."

"Well, go on," said Adrian, impatiently, for Black Jack had stopped to take breath.

"They knew one another, my lord—and he began to talk to them. I think he'd had a little too much; she didn't like his way of talk, and turned round to go back—and then he ran after her, and put his arms round her, and tried to kiss her—and the other girl laughed and encouraged him."

"Confound you!" cried Adrian, at another pause. "Go on, will you?"

"I don't often talk so much, my lord,

except it's in Romany. This chap had got hold of her tight—and sat down on a log—and pulled her on his knee. I thought they were all friends, and perhaps she was his sweetheart, and they were larking—but she screamed for the other girl to help her, and the other only laughed, and told him to go on—and when I saw him pulling her about, and that she didn't like it, I thought I'd stop the game."

"What did you do?"

"Why, I just caught him by the collar—it's rather marshy about there—and dropped him into the wettest place I could find. He swore pretty hard, but didn't show fight . . . else I'd have sent him home to his mother a good deal altered."

Adrian was half wild. Imagine his beautiful pure Amy exposed to such insult! And where was she now? It maddened him to think how powerless he was to help her.

"What did you do next? Was the young lady hurt?"

"Not a bit. The brute had torn her dress a little. She wouldn't speak to the other girl, who was the man's sister, I found. She asked me to take care of her on the way to Harrow—and, as my pal had come up, I said I would. The other stayed behind to help her brother. When we got to the house, there was an old woman there, and I heard a deal of scolding; however, I waited a bit, and the young lady came out and asked me to take her things to the station . . . which I did, and saw her off by the train to London."

"Is that all?"

"Very nearly, my lord. The pretty creature offered me a sovereign, but I didn't take it. Then she asked me for my address, that she might send me something in remembrance: but I told her it was no good

sending a letter by post to Black Jack, in some dingle between York and London. Then she laughed, and wrote something on a leaf in her pocket-book, and tore it out, and asked me to write to her in a month. So I said I couldn't write, or read written hand. So she made me promise to get somebody else to write . . . and as the month's just over, perhaps you'll do it, my lord."

Black Jack took from his tobacco-pouch a somewhat dirty scrap of paper, on which Adrian read *Amy Gray* . . . with Miss Pinnock's name, and that of the institution. He did not kiss the soiled autograph . . . the gipsy was looking on.

"I'll write for you, Johnson," he said: and they began to descend the mountain-side. Possibly he thought that he would write also for himself.

They came at last to Vauvert village,

quaintly perched upon its precipice. It was like living in an eagle's eyry. Lord Oliver Waynflete was dwelling in a stone one-storied house, built round a courtyard—not very large, but the largest in the place. Adrian found his unknown uncle, a tall gaunt man, with a fever-flushed face, his hair and eyebrows and moustache and beard, all snow-white. He was lying on a divan, by a window that looked right out from the edge of the precipice, over the sunny plain below. And by his couch stood his "little daughter," Olive—a tall shapely figure, eighteen or nineteen at least—with dark brown hair and eyes and *olivâtre* complexion and altogether a gipsy look about her. She was singing a wild song to a guitar, as Adrian was shown in by his uncle's servant. This same servant, Antonio, was manifestly a gipsy.

Olive Waynflete, as I have said, was sing-

ing a Spanish ballad. Her attitude was full of a free wild grace. Her voice was a mellow contralto. Her fingers touched the strings of the guitar with facile mastery. Her eyes brightened and her bosom swelled as the fantastic passionate words came from her full ripe lips.

Sweet it is by the summer river
Where oleanders blush rose-red,
When the delicate eyelids quiver,
When with kisses young lips are fed:
Ay, you have known it! Own it . . . own it!
This is the joy the good gods send:
Love's gay rhyme is older than Time is . . .
Ah, but all must have an end!

Love was made to madden and plague us,
Fresh as the flowers of the river-bed;
Sharp as the sword that is dipt in Tagus,
Sad with delight and sweet with dread.
How would you earn it? Spurn it . . . spurn it!
Then will its joy on your heart descend:
Ah, but the crime is, merciless Time is . . .
Yes, for all must have an end!

Sparkling sonorous words whereof these are a faint echo, the maiden sang to a minor melody of Moorish origin. Adrian paused

on the threshold to listen, and did not enter till the song was over. Then he came forward, and Lord Oliver, at once understanding who had arrived, arose to meet him.

"It is kind of you to be here so soon," he said. "This is a curious place to live in, is it not? But it suits me; the air is fresh and clear on this mountain-side; and now that I can wander no longer, I love to look over the beautiful land I have often traversed. This is my daughter Olive."

The young lady spoke to her cousin without the slightest embarrassment, and in idiomatic English, with an accent slightly foreign. Maugre the wandering life which she had led with her father, Olive Waynflete was every inch a lady—looked indeed very much like the princess of some wild tribe. You could fancy her a Penthesilla, at the head of her lovely legion of Thracian cavalry, Adrian, you may be sure, did not find out

all her peculiarities at a first interview.

"You have no baggage but your knapsack, I see," said Lord Oliver. "Bien. There is a room for you, on the same line with this, which Antonio shall show you—you and that splendid dog of yours will find space enough there, I think. Olive, my child, see what refreshment you can find for your cousin."

She left the room for that purpose.

"I shall not keep you here long, Adrian," said Oliver. "My life is flickering away; I have with difficulty kept the flame burning till you could reach me. Now that you can take charge of Olive, I can go."

"But are you sure about this? Is there no remedy?"

"None, I have been to Paris and held consultations with all their best men. I am doomed. Not even this mountain air will keep me alive. Olive knows it; has known

it for a long time, poor child; and when the time comes she'll bear it heroically. She's not given to noisy lamentation. So my dear Adrian, what I ask of you is this: bury me here and take Olive home to Ashridge. You'll find my will and a few other matters of importance in the iron-bound trunk in that corner. That's all. I wanted to tell you as soon as possible, for the doctors say I shall go off in a moment, without notice and without pain. True euthanasia, don't you think?"

Olive re-entered, and Adrian was soon provided with refreshment. He found his newly-discovered relations extremely pleasant. There is an epigram by one John Eliot, a seventeeth century man, running thus:

> In kinsman, friend of old was comprehended;
> Give me one friend, and hang up all my kindred.

These are times to appreciate this drastic distich; but there are exceptions to the rule,

and some people find that they can tolerate not only their cousins, but even their brothers and sisters. Adrian was delighted with his uncle, whose languor concealed infinite enthusiasm and courage—whose conversation was a series of vivid romantic pictures; delighted also with his cousin, who had seen the wild side of the world, dwelt on lonely islands and in the heart of untraversed sierras, but had scarce any experience of the life of cities. Hers was a fresh unfettered nature. She could ride, shoot, swim, do anything that required physical activity; she could talk many languages, and her memory was a storehouse of ballad and legend; but she had read no books, learnt no feminine accomplishments. She differed from ordinary girls as the virgin turf of savannah or alp differs from the lawn of a trim garden. To Adrian she was a most attractive study; he was never tired of

listening to her talk and song. Song, indeed seemed the child's natural language; she would burst into melody as a bird does, unable to help it.

Through the Moorish windows, crowned with semi-circular arches, it was pleasant to look out upon the wide realm of Spain, spread like a map at the foot of the Pyrenean precipice. Olive's deft fingers made cigarettes for herself and her cousin; but chatter and chanson came so fast from her piquant lips, that she smoked one out right seldom.

Across the sunny land of Spain
  Where Moors fell fast before the Cid,
And Paynim blood was shed like rain,—
  In flying mists of summer hid
    Stands sweet Madrid.

Rings thro' the street an amorous tune,
  And low light laughter sounds between,
For midnight there is highest noon,
  And Love is master of the scene—
    Whose sword is keen.

Come forth, my knight! The moon's rim dips,
  And young feet tread the magic shade,
And warm the touch of ripe red lips,
  And cold the touch of sharp steel blade—
    So the game is played.

CHAPTER VIII.

MISS PINNOCK'S MATERNAL AUTHORITY.

LEAVING Adrian and Olive to enjoy song and cigarettes together in chambers built by some Moorish architect on the dizzy edge of a Pyrenean precipice, I must return to Edward Mowbray, who has perhaps been left rather too long at the Queen's Hotel, Manchester. He went in his usual energetic way about the business which had taken him out of town, permitting himself, however, an occasional reverie of a slightly erotic nature. He was perhaps as much in love with the little governess as was possible for so active and able a man of business. When, a few days later, Amy's letter was

forwarded to him, and he found himself refused, he was prodigiously enraged. He had not expected refusal, having a very fair opinion—as was quite natural—of his own qualifications. There seemed no reason in the world why the little governess should decline an alliance with him: to be the wife of the great Mowbray—a merchant-prince known wherever Manchester is known—was surely a proud position for a young person from an orphan school. Thus argued Mowbray: who shall say that his reasoning was not just?

Would not the majority of governess-orphans jump at such a chance? I don't pretend to know. "The exception proves the rule," is a favourite quotation with writers ignorant of logic; the complete canon is that the exception proves the rule in things not excepted. Now Amy Gray was clearly a "thing excepted;" she was in

love with Lord Waynflete, whence her conduct; but this was unknown to Mowbray, which perhaps was fortunate, since it would have made him more angry than ever.

As it was, he made up his mind to dismiss Amy from his memory. It was not easy, for he had taken a strange fancy to the child; but an active man of business is seldom disturbed by haunting thoughts. Mowbray plunged fiercely into his work—more fiercely than his wont, to the perplexity of his junior partners and chief clerks. The former held a private meeting on the subject, and discussed it much in this fashion.

Lestrange.—[This was the fast partner, a bachelor, who drove a pair of horses, wore a big diamond, and ostentatiously drank Champagne on all occasions.] What the deuce has come to the governor, Mr. Smith? He's sharper than ever since he got into Parliament.

Smith.—[The senior of the juniors; had been Mowbray's father's principal clerk; possessed a portly Mrs. Smith, with a long series of Miss Smiths.] Well, Mr. Lestrange, I don't know. He certainly is showing unusual energy at present. It's a good thing for the firm, you know—a very excellent thing—when the head is in the House of Commons.

Brown.—[Cynical, snuff-taking, snuff-coloured, elderly, and a bachelor by profession.] Don't know about that, Smith. Think men of business are better in their counting-houses and on 'Change. What good does Mowbray do himself or the firm? I don't see.

Jenkins.—[Juniorest partner, usually snubbed.] Don't you think it gives the house a sort of prestige, Mr. Brown?

Brown.—Prestige! Pshaw! [Takes snuff.]

Rogerson.—[Partner with artistic tastes, with an ambition to imitate Mowbray, and an idea that he should himself be an ornament to the House of Commons.] Well, I don't think Jenkins is far wrong. Mowbray's being in Parliament can't hurt us, that's quite certain—and I shouldn't be at all surprised if he were to become Chancellor of the Exchequer.

Brown.—*I* should.

Lestrange.—Not such a fool, I guess. Why should Mowbray work like a nigger for the public? Being in Parliament must be a bore to him, I should think.

Rogerson.—I don't agree with you, Mr. Lestrange. A man with an active mind naturally likes political occupation. Besides, Parliament is so good an introduction to society.

Smith.—O, Mr. Mowbray's position and fortune are sufficient to command the best society.

Rogerson.—Not precisely, Mr. Smith. That's the mistake we make in Manchester. Mowbray is first-class here, but he couldn't get into the Chandos Club, or to Lady Agincourt's Saturday Evenings.

Brown.—Why should he want to?

Rogerson.—Mr. Smith was talking of good society. I suppose we should all of us like to get a glimpse of the best.

Jenkins.—Of course: everybody would.

Brown.—What confounded nonsense!

Lestrange.—I should, I know. Good evening, gentlemen. I shall be late for dinner.

As the partners separated, each with somewhat different reflexions, old Smith, absolute believer in his chief, felt as much pride and delight as if M.P. were tacked to his own name. Brown, cynical and perhaps envious, sneered at the whole thing, and persuaded himself that he thought

Mowbray an ass. Rogerson built a castle in the air—saw himself also in Parliament, a member of an exclusive club, and dining with peers. Lestrange thought that if he were in similar luck, he'd make acquaintance with Lord Rattler, who eloped with Lady Fanny Flyaway, and won a hundred thousand on the Derby, both in one week. Jenkins's thoughts were so muddled that I cannot attempt to describe them.

There were other persons much interested in Edward Mowbray—namely, the ladies of Manchester. Now that he was in Parliament, he was more desirable than ever; and I am not prepared to say that the disappearance of his daughter was not a recommendation. Young ladies had always been apt to show themselves gushingly affectionate to poor little Ethel Evelyn; still, a rich widower without a daughter is perhaps preferable to one who has such a possession.

But Mowbray did not on this occasion give his fair adversaries many chances. Although he would hardly confess it to himself, he could not talk to a woman without thinking of Amy Gray—without thinking how different she was from everybody else. Angry as he was with her, and with himself for remembering her, he could not shake off that remembrance.

Having wound up his Manchester business, he went off abruptly to Mowbray Mansion, and wrote to Terrell to meet him there. The waving woods of Ashridge Manor were full of stately beauty; the old house looked calmly down on the meeting of the two rivers: there was nothing new in that quiet neighbourhood. The Marquis and his wife and daughter were at home, for her ladyship felt disinclined for London, and there was no momentous business in the House of Peers. They had one guest—

Ponsonby the poet—whom I have mentioned as sending a valentine to Lady Mary. Aylmer Ponsonby was doubtless a scion of the family whose loyal motto—*Pro rege, lege, grege*—the democrats turn into *Pro rege, lege grege.* Be that as it may, he was a gentleman and an elegant scholar—a poet, not a mere poetaster—a writer of exquisite trifles, polished as if they had come from Verona. Trifles they were which he gave to the world—or rather to the favoured few; but it was generally supposed that he was revolving some mighty work in his Twickenham Tusculum. Ponsonby's most intimate friends talked mysteriously of a locked volume containing a brilliant satire, as yet unfinished, which was designed to amaze the world on some future day.

Meanwhile his custom was to produce occasional lyrics and epigrams, which attained a limited and exclusive circulation in

manuscript. When a few of these had accumulated, it was his habitude to print them at a private press, with all the luxury of typography. I like printing when it becomes a fine art—I like to see

> The songs of Maro fill
> The silvery types of smooth-leafed Baskerville:

but such typography is seldom attainable in these days of cheap books and journals. Now cheap literature is a prodigious benefit; but it were a pity that there should be no higher forms. In the parallel case of art, the wealthy amateur can hang his halls with the originals of Landseer and Leighton, while poorer mortals are fain to be content with prints. Men of princely fortune would do literature a service if they called for superb editions of their favourite authors, wherewith to adorn their libraries. But you see, a picture hangs conspicuous on a wall, and proves to all comers its owner's wealth

and taste; whereas the works of a great poet, however nobly printed, can but occupy the recess of a library. Mr. Ponsonby, however, was resolved that his poems should have an extrinsic as well an intrinsic value. Only a few copies were printed—on the daintiest paper, with the choicest type; and these were bound by an artist in vellum as rich as Devonshire cream, or Russian leather odorous with the aroma of silver birch-rind.

Now it so happened that the patrician poet had a slight knowledge of that Bohemian barrister, Terrell; they had encountered each other in certain metropolitan haunts of the literati. And on the very day of Terrell's arrival they met. Mowbray was so accustomed to tell his friend everything, that, after some hesitation, he confided to him what had occurred between Amy and himself. The barrister, having heard the story, and advised Mowbray to forget the

young lady, strolled out to think over it.

"By Jove!" he soliloquised, "to think of Mowbray's wanting to marry that child! And yet, why shouldn't he? She's a bonny little thing! If I were a marrying man, she'd exactly suit me! Any way, she is much too good for a governess. I wonder why she refused Mowbray? He's a good-looking fellow—just the right age to marry—heaps of coin, too. Egad, she must fancy somebody else. Wonder who it is? Beg your pardon. Why, Ponsonby!"

These last sentences aloud; for Terrell, in his reverie, run right against the poet, who had lounged out to post a letter, and was bothering himself to find a point for an epigram. The collision destroyed all hope of such a consummation; but Ponsonby good-humouredly shook hands with Terrell, saying,

"What brings you into these parts? I supposed you were busy at Westminster."

"I am staying with Mowbray here—the Manchester man, you know."

"O, is he a friend of yours? He is not on very good terms with the Ashridge people, is he?"

"With the Marquis? No. Mowbray is a regular Radical, you know, and detests the aristocracy."

"He'll be cured of that, now he's in Parliament. He is the sort of man that ought to marry into the peerage. My little friend, Lady Mary, is too young for him. But perhaps he's married already."

"No," said Terrell. "He's a widower, with one daughter, who mysteriously disappeared some time ago."

"Ah, yes: I saw it in the *Times*. And the child has never been found? Well, that's an additional reason for your friend's marrying. Isn't he rather foolish not to cultivate an acquaintance at Ashridge? The

Marquis likes to be on good terms with everybody."

"Mowbray and Lord Waynflete contested Rothcastle, if you remember."

"Well, and Mowbray won—so he can afford to be forgiving," said Ponsonby. "I think your millionaire Radicals are very ill-advised when they take a hostile attitude to the aristocracy. Rank and wealth are natural allies. Can't you tame your bear, Terrell?"

"I am hoping that the House will civilize him, as you suggest. By the way, Lord Waynflete is abroad, I hear."

"Yes, but he's on his way home. I expect he will be here before I leave. By the way, *he* talks of marriage."

For Adrian, having, while wandering far from Amy, made up his mind that he loved her, had thought it right at once to tell the Marquis thereof: and the latter, who saw

no reason to conceal his son's intention, told the Marchioness at the breakfast-table. It is not in human nature that a lady of *la haute volée* should contentedly acquiesce in her son's, or even her stepson's, marrying a governess: so the Marchioness made some rather keen remarks on the subject, whereat her husband laughed good-naturedly. He knew his son, he told her, and knew that he would not be persuaded to change his mind in such a matter; and as to Miss Gray, why, the Marquis held the dreadfully democratic theory that one lady was as good as another, and even, as the Irishman told the Chartist lecturer, *better too!* The Marquis knew Adrian well enough to know that his choice would be a lady—in the esoteric sense; so he took the matter with singular coolness, and said, indeed, that it was much better than if the redoubtable Lily Lechmere had insisted on marrying him. I don't know

that the Marchioness—*née* Vallance de Vere —was convinced; but, at any rate, she saw that Adrian's father believed in Adrian, and so ceased to argue the question.

Thus was it that Ponsonby was able to surprise Terrell with the news that Lord Waynflete was to marry Amy Gray: for the conversation had enlightened him as to who the lady was; and, seeing no reason for concealment, he mentioned it as a curious coincidence that Adrian should engage himself to Mowbray's governess.

"Not that there is any engagement as yet, so far as I understand," continued Ponsonby. "Lord Waynflete seemed to have made up his mind, but I don't fancy he had ascertained what the lady thought about it. I suppose he felt no doubt on the subject. Why should he? Governesses don't get such offers every day."

"Very true," said Terrell, and they parted

—Ponsonby to walk across the Common, and try if by any means he could mend the broken thread of his epigram. I have never heard whether he succeeded.

As to the Bohemian barrister, he was rather amused at this complication. He went to Rothcastle on business for Mowbray, and, as he drove there and back, he reflected on the little drama, and speculated as to its catastrophe. Would Amy, having refused Mowbray, accept Lord Waynflete? Was it because she saw a chance of the young lord that she had refused the merchant? Was she a sly minx, after all? Terrell had taken a strong fancy to her, attracted by her innocence and simplicity; but his experience of women had made him mistrustful, and he could not help wondering whether Amy Gray's simplicity was not the result of consummate art.

Should he tell Mowbray what he had

heard from the poet? At first he had decided that he would not. But, as his reflexions tended to make him doubtful about Amy, he gradually changed his mind. He thought Mowbray would perchance be brought into a healthier temper by hearing that he had a rival. At present he was rather surly; if he became fiercely indignant, Terrell thought he might be more endurable.

They did not meet till dinner—which meal they took silently enough in the small dining-room. When dessert was on the table, and their glasses were filled with fine old port, Mowbray grew a trifle mellower in mood. The worst temper can scarcely resist good wine. And yet I dont know: temper is so much an affair of digestion, of circulation; if a good dinner does not agree with a man, if fine wine turns acid in his veins, who can blame him for having a vile temper? Mowbray's, however, was excellent good—

when he was not thwarted or contradicted.

"Well, how did you get on with Sherwood?" he presently asked.

"Very well. There is only one treatment for that class of men: they *must* be kicked. If they see that you know them thoroughly, and despise them accordingly, they are manageable. I have convinced Sherwood that he must keep people from applying to you."

"I wish it were not necessary to employ such scoundrels," said Mowbray. "I suppose, if one had vote by ballot, their occupation would be gone."

"O dear no," said the barrister. "The ballot will make it quite easy to buy a borough. A candidate would send his agent to the local agent with this offer: Bring so many votes to the poll, and you shall have so much money—one less, and I won't pay a farthing. It would be payment by results, which succeeds so well in education."

"Then you think the thing incurable."

"No, I don't. Voting papers would work a perfect cure—but then they would give the Conservatives a permanent majority in the House . . . and you don't want that, I suppose."

"Certainly not," said Mowbray. "I suppose you arranged about the various subscriptions."

"Yes; and promised a silver cup to be shot for by the Volunteers. Everybody is delighted with your liberality, Sherwood says—and indeed I heard it from a dozen other people. I met the Rector, and one of the churchwardens, and a couple of dissenting deacons, and the secretary to the cricket-club, and the steward of the races, and they are all equally pleased. There's nothing like catholic generosity. Whatever people may say, you can please all parties—if only you have got money enough."

Mowbray fell into a reverie, and sipped his wine in silence, fixing his eyes on a picture which he had lately purchased, and which hung opposite him. It was the work of a great artist, and represented Robert Browning's marvellous little girl from the silk-mill, taking her blithe holiday, dreaming pleasant day-dreams, singing joyous songs, which all have strange significance for those who hear them in Asolo. Edward Mowbray was not the man to appreciate the poet's idea; but he had thought Pippa somewhat like Miss Gray, and had bought the picture in consequence. The likeness was there: Mowbray, as he drank his port, saw opposite him the provoking little girl whom he would fain have made his wife. He heartily wished the picture anywhere else.

"You're tired of port, I see, Terrell," he said, by-and-by. "Ring the bell; we'll have some Lafitte. I suppose you have been

thinking me a confounded fool since this morning."

"We are all fools in matters of this sort," quoth the Bohemian. "But has it ever occurred to you that Miss Gray might have had an attachment to somebody else?"

"How could she? None of the people I have had here were at all the sort to suit her. She came straight from an orphan institution, and couldn't very well have known anybody. You don't think Jacob Jones junior would condescend to make love to her, do you?"

"No, I don't," replied Terrell, with a smile. "But what do you think of Lord Waynflete?"

"Lord Waynflete! Why, she didn't know him."

"I can't say, really. But I have heard to-day that he is expected home very soon, and proposes to marry Miss Gray."

Mowbray's very lips grew pallid with anger. He crushed the claret glass with which he was playing.

"Is this true, Terrell?" he asked.

"Yes, I heard it from a man I know, who happens to be staying at Ashridge Manor. I don't quite understand the story —but Lord Waynflete seems to have made up his mind to marry the young lady."

"He shall never do it!" said Mowbray, fiercely. "These aristocrats try to thwart me in every way. There was the Common —what business had they to interfere. However, I had the best of it at Rothcastle—and I'll beat them in this matter too. Terrell, you must help me?"

He filled a tumbler with Lafitte—but the generous wine seemed to make him angrier.

"What help can I give you?" asked Terrell. "If Miss Gray means to marry Waynflete, it will be hard to prevent it."

"Something *shall* be done," said Mowbray. "Your story seems to show that the young lord has never yet asked her. Do you think he knows where she is? Very likely he thinks she is still in my employment."

"Perhaps you are right," replied the Bohemian. "Do you know where she is?"

"She is easily found."

Then he explained to Terrell that almost certainly she would consult Miss Pinnock in reference to another situation.

"We must lose no time," he said. "We'll go to town by the first train to-morrow morning. You must at once call on this Miss Pinnock at the Institution, and find out where the girl is, and take measures accordingly. It will be odd if we can't keep her beyond Waynflete's reach."

"Abduction is serious," said Terrell.

"Abduction! Who talks of such non-

sense? Try to be sensible, Terrell. This young creature has been brought up from her childhood by the woman at the Orphan Institution; I daresay she worships her; at any rate she has never ventured to disobey her. Well, we can easily secure Miss Pinnock's influence over her. You needn't spare money, you know: if a vulgar bribe doesn't seem the thing, try a diamond bracelet. We must get the girl an engagement somewhere abroad, where Waynflete can't find her."

Terrell of course was ready to undertake Mowbray's behest; and the two gentlemen got away to town by the first train next day. Mowbray went to Prince's Gate: Terrell lost no time in calling at the Institution.

Miss Pinnock received him with her accustomed affable dignity. The Bohemian saw through her at a glance; recognised the curious admixture of vanity and ambition in

her character; perceived that she was by no means a subject for direct bribery. After a few preliminary remarks, he said—

"I have taken the liberty to call, Miss Pinnock, on rather a delicate mission. I am acting for my friend, Mr. Mowbray, in whose family a young lady named Gray, a pupil of yours, was engaged as a governess. You have probably seen Miss Gray since she left Prince's Gate?"

"O yes. I obtained another situation for her at once. She did not remain very long in it, however; and was here till a day or two ago. She has just taken another engagement."

"I suppose you were acquainted, Miss Pinnock, with the young lady's reason for leaving my friend Mowbray?"

"She had lost her pupil," replied the lady, briefly.

"Yes: but that loss had occurred some

time before she saw the necessity of leaving. There was another reason."

"There was, and I see you know it. Miss Gray informed me that Mr. Mowbray made her a proposal of marriage, and that she declined. Such a proposal did her great honour; but evidently, having decided to decline it, she could not remain in Mr. Mowbray's employment."

"You speak very justly. Miss Gray, *in that particular*, acted worthily of the excellent training which she had received in this Institution."

"Am I to understand," asked Miss Pinnock, "that Mr. Mowbray was dissatisfied with her conduct in other respects?"

"Will you allow me to reply with a question? Have you any idea *why* Miss Gray declined Mr. Mowbray's offer?"

"Not the slightest. I supposed that she thought him too old. Young girls are apt

to consider a man quite elderly when he is in the prime of life."

"Well," replied Terrell, "I have no knowledge of Miss Gray's opinions on this point. But, since she left—indeed, within the last few days—my friend Mowbray has heard rumours of her having formed an engagement, which he thinks objectionable. This is of course no business of his—except that when so very young a lady is in an independent position, her employers ought perhaps to take a kind of paternal interest in her."

"But Mr. Mowbray's interest was not exactly paternal," retorted Miss Pinnock.

"Quite true," said Terrell, with a laugh. "However, now that she has declined to marry him, he still feels anxious for her welfare, and would regret to see her make an undesirable connexion. I am in his confidence, and he asked me to mention the

matter to you as being the only person who can be said to have any authority over Miss Gray."

"What you say is very reasonable," replied Miss Pinnock. "But I ought to know something more in detail before I can interfere to any purpose."

"We have no accurate information to offer," rejoined Terrell. "There is only a vague suspicion that Miss Gray had entangled herself with some one quite unsuited to her, and that this induced her to refuse Mowbray. He is so much interested in her welfare that he would willingly aid to place her beyond the reach of the person who has gained an influence over her."

"This is all very mysterious. If Miss Gray, who is now in another situation, chooses to correspond with this unknown person, how am I to help it?"

"Ah," replied the barrister, "but I for-

got to tell you that the person in question is abroad, and that he is believed at present to suppose that Miss Gray is still in Mowbray's employ. When he returns, and finds that she has left, he will naturally inquire for her here. Does not that seem probable?"

"It certainly does. If any such person should call here, I shall know how to receive him."

"Suppose, however, that he should write to Miss Gray," said Terrell, "should you consider it your duty to forward the letter?"

"I am not sure about that," she replied. "What do *you* think?"

"How old is Miss Gray?"

"She must be just nineteen."

"Then," he answered, "as a lawyer, I should say you were justified in acting towards her as if she were your own daughter. My opinion is that you should not hesitate

to take any steps which might prevent her being the prey of designing persons."

Miss Pinnock pondered the question for some time.

"Yes," she said at length, "I think you are right. She has been brought up here ever since she was a mere baby, and of course the Institution is responsible for her welfare. If any letters for her should arrive at Mr. Mowbray's residence, they can be sent on to me. I will do my best to save her from the peril you appear to apprehend."

"I felt sure you would. My friend Mowbray will be greatly obliged to you. And if there is any way in which he can benefit the institution over which you so admirably preside, I am sure he will be delighted. He is a millionaire, you know, and a very generous one."

The crafty barrister saw that Miss Pinnock

was extremely proud of the Orphan Institution, and of her own position there. She considered herself a model schoolmistress—equal at least in learning to that Roman blue stocking who married the laughing poet Canius of Cadiz:

> Hanc sibi jure petat magni senis Atticus hortus;
> Nec minus esse suam Stoica turba velit.

Terrell, having gained his point, professed much interest in the establishment, and was conducted over it by the Lady Principal, and delicately praised all her arrangements. And when he took his leave, he left Miss Pinnock remarkably satisfied with herself, and anticipating much from Mr. Mowbray's gratitude. He had ascertained from her that Miss Gray was not at present acting as a governess, but was "companion to a lady"—and that the lady was Miss Griffin, of Wyvern Grange, Berks. He reported progress that evening to Mowbray, who was

pretty well satisfied, but still would have liked to do something at once. He detested waiting for other people to act. His energetic spirit fretted sorely when it was impossible to do anything.

Miss Pinnock, after the Bohemian barrister had left her, reflected on the conversation, and convinced herself that it was her duty to interpose between Amy and her nameless pursuer. Of course, as Amy was not of age, and as she had no parents, Miss Pinnock was entitled to exert authority over her. In a case like the present there could be no hesitation. Edward Mowbray, M.P., was a man of the very highest respectability —information furnished by him must of course be trustworthy. And, as to her duty in the matter, had she not the advice of Mr. Terrell, whom everybody knew to be a barrister of eminence? Yes, Miss Pinnock clearly saw her duty—and it will be

conceived that she was by no means the person to shirk any duty that she saw.

The next morning's post brought her the opportunity to do the duty which she saw. It came in the form of a letter, with many Spanish and French postmarks—sealed with a crest, on a chapeau a lion statant guardant, with the motto—"*Auspice Teucro.*"

Miss Pinnock, we know, was a great Latinist—yet did she not comprehend that motto.

CHAPTER IX.

CONCERNING LITERATE PERSONS AND ILLITERATE.

IT is the tenth of June. The moon is nearly at the full, and pours a flood of light down on the roses of my lawn. I have one or two roses that are perfect in their loveliness and fragrance. Ah, the rose, when at its climax of beauty, is divinest of all flowers! The rhododendron, being late in this year of drought, is also flowering with the roses; but, though rhododendron means rose-tree, how wide the difference between the one and the other! Scentless flowers, however beautiful, are uninteresting; a handsome flower without frag-

rance is like a handsome woman without intelligence.

The cultivation of certain senses comes late in the history of human civilization. The Greeks educated eye and hand, but the education of the ear is recent. Next will come the education of the nose—which has been strangely neglected. Odours have their gamut, like sounds, as Mr. Septimus Piesse has ingeniously shown. Blossom of hawthorn strikes the same note as Gruyère cheese. When the scent of the hyacinth is strong, it exactly resembles that of the onion. We have not yet attained even the elements of nasal science. How can I help having faith in its future extension, when I smell the multitudinous fragrance of this June eventide?

It is the tenth of June, and this morning's *Times* brought ill-news to me, and to all Englishmen. Charles Dickens is dead. Yes,

our good friend, our welcome guest, our wise teacher, who taught us unconsciously, will never give us any fresh lessons. What he has written will last as long as the language: he has given immortality to more men and women than any creator of characters since Shakespeare. There was more of Chaucer's spirit in him than of the greater poet's; and there was a touch of caricature in his style, which induced him to carve men and women after the fashion of the gurgoyles in old cathedrals. But, O what a gallery of living pictures he has left us! Does anybody ever tire of the amiable yet eccentric Mr. Pickwick, or of his resourceful servitor, Sam Weller? Can there be weariness of Dick Swiveller, or of Micawber? "Who," wrote Thackeray, "does not venerate the chief of that illustrious family who, being stricken by misfortune, wisely and greatly turned his attention to *coals*—

the accomplished, the epicurean, the dirty, the delightful Micawber?" Thoroughly did Thackeray enjoy Dickens; but it may be doubted whether Dickens could equally enjoy Thackeray.

Up to the last the creator of Mrs. Gamp and of Mr. Pecksniff was as vigorous and vivid as ever. Curiously enough, two novelists of a very different type came into unexpected rivalry in this year 1870. The author of *Vivian Grey* gave us *Lothair;* the author of *Pickwick* gave us *Edwin Drood.* The former began ten years earlier than the latter; was, indeed, the most popular novelist in London, when Charles Dickens was in his fourteenth year. What is the difference between them—the essential difference? I take it that Disraeli is a Watteau, and that Dickens was a Hogarth. I often wonder—which will be most read in 1970, *Vivian Grey* or *Pickwick*—*Coningsby* or *Martin*

Chuzzlewit. Nobody can tell. Perhaps the water of Lethe will have washed both away. One would like to know wherein are the elements of eternity.

I have as yet read but two monthly instalments of *Edwin Drood:* I have read all *Lothair*, and, indeed, have reviewed it in two or three London journals, and in one of the Quarterlies. I regard *Lothair* as a mystery, greater than the Asian—an enigma that would perplex Œdipus; and I think Mr. Goldwin Smith has done a great service to society by writing all the way from Ithaca (a weak Odysseus) to say that he had found a cap which fitted him. I also think that if *Lothair* has re-converted the Marquis of Bute, it is very lucky. Lord St. Aldegonde and Gaston Phœbus are two admirable characters. I think Mr. Blackwood, of the Edinburgh magazine, has absurdly blundered in attempting to outdo Mrs. Stowe's attack

on Byron. But I don't care about Cardinals and Garibaldians: and I feel more comfortably at home in the city of Cloisterham, laughing at Sapsea as an idiot of the dignified type, regarding Honeythunder as the loudest of humbugs, cronying with the athletic and straightforward Crisparkle, and falling absolutely in love with dear little Rosa Bud. That child, so far as I have made her acquaintance, is positively the nicest little girl I have encountered in modern fiction. It is hardly too much to say that she is worthy to associate with Amy Gray.

Vergilium tantum vidi! Ah, we have most of us seen him, reading with marvellous art extracts from his own works. Is it well for an author to do that kind of thing, if he can do it ably? I think so. In old Greek and Roman times, before the invention of printing, it was the natural way of introducing a work to the public. The *Iliad*

and the *Odyssey* were not published in monthly parts: they were recited by their author after supper, in the palaces of the chieftains who had sacked wide-streeted Troy. I suspect Horace read very badly, but I should like to have heard him read his alcaics. Certes, I have heard young ladies say that they were very much disenchanted after having seen Charles Dickens, and heard him read; but then I think it just as well that young ladies should be disenchanted.

The dead loss to the world by the death of a writer like Dickens is not on the instant to be estimated. A good many people rashly reflect that it is only the loss of so much amusement, and that a Trollope will furnish entertainment nearly as good. Ah, fallacious fancy! The *amusement* which Dickens's books so freely offer is only his second quality—his first being that he was a masterly revealer of human nature.

"The proper study of mankind is man."

Compare Dickens with Adams or Leverrier, with Liebig or Herschel. A new planet and a new extract of meat are good things in their way: but who would not rather lose them both than that Sam Weller or Sairey Gamp should never have existed? A genius like Dickens perpetuates new types of character—new, I mean, on paper, though old in life. Everyone of these is a definite and solid addition to the science of humanity. Multitudinous men saw a chain or a rope suspended by its two ends before the mathematician who found its equation—

$$y = \frac{c}{2}\left(e^{\frac{x}{c}} + e^{-\frac{x}{c}} \right)$$

Similarly a great writer like Dickens gives us the equations of men we have known. Suppose that his name were to be forgotten, his works no longer read. Still, his ideas and conceptions have entered into human

thought, and cannot be annihilated. They are imperishable. Myriads of dull fellows who have never read Shakespeare use his language, and are saved from utter idiocy by the fact that his intense ideas live in the atmosphere of English thought. Dickens, in his degree, has the same power.

Shall I venture to compare him with some of his compeers? One thinks at once of Thackeray. In literary art he was Thackeray's inferior; in creative capacity he was far above him. Becky Sharp excepted, Thackeray created nobody. Warrington, Pendennis, Philip, were all reflexions of Thackeray himself. Dickens never reflected himself. He wrote objectively; and his gallery of portraits is richer than that of almost any English writer since Shakespeare. Lord Lytton, again, is a great novelist—but his characters are studies rather than conceptions, and from Pelham to Pisistratus

Caxton there is not one whom we intuitively recognise as a permanent friend. Pelham is a younger brother of Vivian Gray. Pisistratus Caxton is a weak and degenerate descendant of our immortal intimate, Tristram Shandy.

Even when Dickens is compared with the most popular of modern poets he has the advantage. Mr. Tennyson is a consummate artist, but he cannot paint human beings. His Claribels, Adelines, Margarets, Eleanores, are all as much alike as Lady Corisande and her sisters in *Lothair*. As to men—he has none. His best works are *Maud* and *The Princess:* the hero of one is a lunatic—of the other, imbecile. I think Mr. Tennyson, although he has never achieved the mastery of English blank verse, has done some remarkably good work: but he is a trifle too feminine always, and he has scarcely a spark of humour, and throughout all his writings he

has not created a single character. Now this, for a poet, is fatal; and I fear that the Laureate is doomed to occupy a place in the less frequented gallery of English literature —where Hayley and Cowper, Shenstone and Southey, have niches of their own. Men will read Coleridge's *Christabel* and Praed's *Vicar* when *In Memoriam* has found its place on the shelf of oblivion beside Young's *Night Thoughts* and Blair's *Grave*—when the long and lugubrious poems on King Arthur (a wretched Welshman) are consigned to the same limbo as Lord Lytton's and Sir Richard Blackmore's pseudo-epics on the same dreary theme.

Now the great writer whom we have just lost instinctively kept within the limits of human interest. I wonder if he read *The Holy Grail*? I wonder what he thought of it, if he did? His was a strangely wide and varied experience of life, while Mr. Tenny-

son seems to possess no experience of life whatever. The obituarists of Charles Dickens have some of them felt bound to defend him against the charge of being *vulgar*. Why, to be vulgar in the true sense was his power. He knew and loved the common folk. By way of paradox, these people further maintain that he might have drawn ladies and gentlemen very well, only he had no leisure to enter their society. I suspect he had quite as much leisure as Shakespeare, who painted both ladies and gentlemen excellent well. But to draw them was not Dickens's forte. He wanted characters strongly marked. A lady or a gentleman, in the highest sense of the words, is a human being physically and mentally *complete* —without any irregularity or eccentricity. Now to draw such a person, and yet to leave some impression of character, is simply the hardest work that a poet or a novel-

ist can have to do. Horatio and Mercutio, gentlemen pure and simple, are types not to be found in writers other than the very first. The equal development of all the faculties in a gentleman or lady of the highest type is a very difficult thing for the fictionist. It baffles even the portrait-painter. Compare a portrait by Titian or Vandyke or Reynolds with the work of any ordinary artist: the great painter gives you the whole man—the small one exaggerates some one or more of his peculiarities, and so produces what is commonly known as "a striking likeness." But, if you patiently study a portrait of a great man by a great artist, you will in time learn almost as much about him as you could from intercourse with the living man himself.

I say then that it is no drawback from Dickens's genius that there are no gentlemen and ladies on his brilliant and various

canvas. He kept to his natural track. He investigated and immortalized lower forms of humanity. Shakespeare could do both; could give us a Falstaff as well as a Hamlet, an Autolycus as well as a Prospero. To object to Dickens for not attempting the same achievement is to blame him for modestly thinking himself not quite equal to Shakespeare. He knew his power, and, within the limits of that power, he reached perfection.

It is confidently asserted that Her Majesty was anxious to confer upon Dickens some mark of Royal recognition; and that, as he naturally did not wish to be made a baronet, or anything of that sort, it was proposed to make him a Privy Councillor. What an idea! He would have found himself in a curious mob of muffs. There are about a couple of hundred of them, including three princes of Royal blood, two arch-

bishops, fourteen of our twenty dukes, ten of our eighteen marquises, many earls, viscounts, barons, one bishop, two novelists (Lytton and Disraeli), and a crowd of minor folk, distinguished and undistinguished—the last on the list being one Acton Smee Ayrton. Fancy Charles Dickens coming next!

So long as England continues to be a monarchy, it would be well if the monarch were able to recognise in some way the higher forms of literary genius. I say nothing of the artists: spoilt by courtly association, they deign to be knighted and baroneted—and Sir Edwin Landseer runs in a curricle with Sir James Lawrence. But the Sovereign can only make one poet the Laureate; and as to making Dickens a Privy Councillor, the notion is simply ludicrous. I think the idea of the Venetians, who exempted Titian from all taxation, was

not a bad one. Considering what a genius like Dickens does for the English, they could well afford to keep the tax-gatherer from his door.

The Romans laid a heavy tax on bachelors, and gave numerous privileges and exemptions to the father of three children. They were very right, I think. But if the father of three children deserve privileges, *a fortiori* does the author of only one good book. And what could be done for a man like Dickens that should show the nation's love for him? Money he got, by sheer force of genius; social distinction was a thing beneath him. If he had been made Duke of Gad's Hill, it would have offended all the other dukes, and it would have been an insult to him.

It is no good to reason: I will write verses.

Dickens is dead. Who has not lost a friend?
Far, far too early seems this sudden end
  Of one whom all men loved. The fatal hour
    Arrives too soon for him,
    Whose glance had not grown dim,
Whose heart and brain preserved their fresh and liberal power.

"Whom the Gods love, die young"—so wise men hold:
This man dies young, who never could grow old.
  Genius like his to the last hour receives
    The golden gift divine;
    And to the last there shine
The love within his heart, the life upon his leaves.

Such life! Old Chaucer was his prototype:
But Geoffrey's verse in Charles's prose grew ripe.
  He gave us Pickwick, Quixote of the day—
    Weller, the Sancho Panza
    Of a new extravaganza—
Quilp, the half-human goblin, devilishly gay.

Micawber, too, the strangely sanguine scamp—
The ebrious Swiveller, the garrulous Gamp—
  Pecksniff's low tricks, and Skimpole's dainty thirst:
    Latest, to move our wonder,
    Crisparkle, Honeythunder—
Men whom we all have met, though Dickens drew them first.

His canvas glows with many charming girls,
But, surely, choicest of these pretty pearls,
  Is little Rosa of the cloistered City—
    A wayward gay coquettish
    Provoking loving pettish
Darling of life's young spring, creature to scold and pity.

Ay, the fine hand!—it had not lost its cunning:
Ah, but the strong swift life-blood ceases running—
Pass quick away the pathos and the mirth:
When shall we see again
One whose creative brain
Adds such a chapter to the Bible of the Earth?

One point has just occurred to me—quite accidentally, as I was looking at the full moon, considering why in the world it could not be arranged to be always full and always to shine at night—and that is, that there was no mystery in Dickens's writings. His brain ran clear. Just at present we all go in for mystery—and even *he* put it into the title of his last book—but he could not put it into the book itself. All his characters are intelligible men and women. He did not see the whole of life, but what he saw he saw clearly. There has been but one Sophocles. The double gift, of seeing human beings clearly and of seeing them on all sides, is rare indeed. Not to every one is given the stereoscope of poetry.

O that the world of letters could be weeded! What is a weed, say you? It is a plant growing in the wrong place. How many literary men would be more properly situate if they grew behind counters, or flourished at the tail of the plough! People *will* mistake their vocation. I know a man —a very good fellow, his friends say—who, having certain fluency of scribbling, has become a highly successful journalist. I hope and believe that he makes a thousand a year by journalism. Is not that enough? With very fair Sauterne in Trinity Square at thirty-four shillings, a quiet man should be able to live on a thousand a year. Geoffrey Swindlo thinks not so.

"I give you my word, sir," says Tom Harington to me, at the "Cheshire Cheese" —poor Tom, you know, is always very flush or very hard up—"I give you my word that Swindlo lives at the rate of five thou-

sand a year. *How does he do it?* Why, there's a new firm of wine merchants—Vaurien and Vermouth—eager to get customers: our friend inspects their cellars, tastes their stuff, remarks how much he likes certain wines, gives them a gushing column in the *Morning Miracle.* Their fortune is made, and he gets wine for life. Why not? I calculate he does very much the same with his butcher and his baker."

"And his candlestick-maker," says I.

"Ay, his chandeliers are hung for him, and his gas laid on; and his wife—she's rather a nice little woman—gets her gloves and boots in the same charming manner; and Salviati gives him the glass of beautiful Venice; and I shouldn't wonder if he has the pick of the pictures at the Academy. Then he has opera-boxes, railway-passes, Richmond and Greenwich dinners, entrance everywhere. O, he's a lucky beggar; he's

solved the greatest of all secrets, how to do without money."

"Some men," I sententiously remarked, "are too clever to pay their debts—and others are too handsome."

"Hang it!" exclaimed Tom, "if Geoffrey were either handsome or clever, I'd forgive him. But he must be a fool, or he wouldn't write for the *Morning Miracle*: and as for his personal appearance—why, confound it! don't you remember his low forehead, his little pig-like eyes, his vacant mouth, his shapeless body, his broad damp paws, his square feet? Why, he's a mere caricature of humanity!"

Tom, as we know, is a remarkably good-looking fellow, especially when he has got a new coat from Poole's. But I think his estimate of Geoffrey Swindlo is rather too contemptuous. I have always rather admired Geoffrey's head of hair. It has what

Keats calls a "crisp Numidian curl." But, of course, if a man gets his macassar for nothing, no wonder that his glossy locks remain beautiful for ever.

"By Jove!" resumes Tom Harington, after another glass of rack, "if I were as unscrupulous as Swindlo, what a happy life I might lead! But I am not going to be patronized by a set of shopkeepers."

"No," I remarked; "you patronize them, and then they sue you for the money."

"The ill-conditioned scoundrels!" exclaimed Tom, fiercely stroking his amber moustache. "They ought to be quite content with the fact that a gentleman or a man of genius condescends to deal with them. The infernal impudence of the great British shopkeeper is a complete disgrace to a civilized country."

So you see that Tom Harington and Geoffrey Swindlo come to the same conclu-

sion, though by different routes: "Base is the slave that pays."

For my own part, if literature is to be the paid servant of commerce, I hold that it had best be done in the spirit of the *Londoniad*, an epic conceived by a poet named Lidstone, some eight or ten years ago. He, likely enough, drew his inspiration from Bon Gaultier, who suggested a way in which the two things might be combined. Who does not recollect the tradition of Tarquin and the Augur?

So the Augur touched the tin of Tarquin,
Who suspected some celestial aid:
But he wronged the blameless gods: for harken!
Ere the monarch's bet was rashly laid,
With his searching eye
Did the priest espy
Rodgers's name engraved upon the blade.

The poet of the *Londoniad* improved on his model. Thus I find him dealing with a maker of greenhouses whose name appears imperfectly adapted to poetry.

As a star of the first magnitude, the Seer of Ages ranks,
The spirit that lights up the world through the energy of Shanks.

The poet discovers a patent hat, in the Blackfriars Road.

The hat is so arranged (proclaim it loudly, Muse of Arts!)
That Sol's meridian rays can never strike the parts
Near the head (O sound it far through each fiery nation!)
Secures the face and neck, and perfect in ventilation.

This, though ungrammatical, sounds cool in this scorching rainless June weather—almost as cool as Virgil's.

O, ubi campi
Spercheosque et virginibus bacchata Lacaenis
Taygeta! o qui me gelidis in vallibus Haemi
Sistat, et ingenti ramorum protegat umbra!

It has been said that there is nothing like leather: listen to the poet of the *Londoniad* upon the works of a Bermondsey tanner:

With Plato and the Stagyrite I seem again to walk,
As I converse with intellect, and down in Page's Walk
Superior dyeing now I hail, O ye blest Art Muses!
Of goat, yea, and of sheep-leather for book-binder's uses,
And excellence of workmanship that maketh science smile
Irradiates through our Roberts the whole of Albion's isle.

Say what you will, the poet must have some

imagination who meets Plato and Aristotle in Page's Walk, Bermondsey. No unfragrant tan-yards were there near the gardens of Academus by the Cephisus. And, seriously, if we are to have an alliance of this kind between commerce and letters, I prefer the method chosen by the *Londoniad's* author. There is no false pretence about him. He is man of business and poetaster in one.

Now the fluent Geoffrey Swindlo and his imitators are of a different type. Geoffrey goes in magnificent style to the tradesman whom he deigns to select: he is known to represent the *Morniny Miracle:* who dare refuse him? Geoffrey hath taste, and exercises it; he kills two birds with one stone; he fills his brace of columns and he gets his supply of glass or ironwork. Next morning, you take up your *Miracle*, and you perceive that some new tradesman's wares are most

eloquently depicted as better than any of his predecessors. You read it to your wife—the result is inevitable. Just the same thing happens at a hundred other breakfast tables—the tradesman gets his *quid pro quo* —and the public pay for Geoffrey Swindlo's upholstery and comestibles.

Or there is a new company to be formed —a balloon line, let one suppose, from London to Melbourne, with two or three intermediate stations. The chairman is a man of the world; he wants the adventure eloquently described; he invites Geoffrey and his clan to a dinner at Richmond or Greenwich. He drives them down four-in-hand—and I hope he will drive them safely back. There is a jolly festival overlooking either the wooded eyots or the wide stream alive with steam and sail. Geoffrey knows by long experience the quality of the Hermitage and the Château Yquem. Geoffrey is never too

loquacious; he indulges now and then in a joke, but has learnt that the deferential style is what chiefly delights chairmen and directors; his manner is perfect. So, whether he takes banknotes—of which I have heard Tom Harington savagely accuse him—he manifestly gets good dinners, a thing not to be despised. I do not care about them myself. I dine at home.

Yes, at home—and, in this æstival weather, on the turf beneath my trees. That's the way to live if you want to live long. Have your modest mutton and Montrachet in the fresh air, with merle and mavis singing in the thick foliage above you. Avoid—as you would avoid Dante's Hell—London streets, hot supper-rooms, dinners at the Albion and the Freemason's, Courts of Law, the House of Commons, Club smoking-rooms, levées and drawing-rooms, all the stifling suicidal miseries of town life.

I care not, Fortune, what you me deny;
You cannot rob me of free Nature's grace;
You cannot shut the windows of the sky.

Thus writes the author of *one* poem which is classic. What fools men are who shut the windows of the sky upon themselves!

CHAPTER X.

WYVERN GRANGE.

THERE is not much to be told concerning Amy Gray's adventure at Harrow beyond what Lord Waynflete heard from the lips of Black Jack. Amy, indignant at young Gutch's insolent treatment, and doubly indignant at the thought that his sister could stand by and encourage him to insult her, made up her mind at once to leave her situation. When she reached Harrow, she found that Mrs. Gutch had returned earlier than she intended, and that lady immediately saluted her with vituperative language for having neglected her

pupils. But Amy's spirit was up. She quite astonished herself by her own eloquence. She told Mrs. Gutch that she had been induced by her daughter to take a walk, in order that her son might insult her, and added that she felt strongly inclined to look for a policeman and give them both into custody. The old lady, terribly alarmed for her dear boy, implored Amy not to do anything of the kind: so Amy relented, but at the same time declared that she must leave at once. No argument would induce her to stay. She took, as we have seen, the first train to London.

By-and-by the Gutches, brother and sister, reached their maternal home—Grosvenor looking very forlorn indeed, his hat being shapeless, and his clothes saturated with moist mud. To him his mamma administered consolation and hot brandy and water; to Clara a severe scolding, for lead-

ing her brother into temptation. But in time she got into a better humour, and congratulated herself on having seen the last of Miss Gray, whom she declared to be "a regular stuck-up young person."

Amy, meanwhile, returned to the Orphan Institution, and sought refuge with Miss Pinnock. That lady, though tolerably kind, began to think her pupil rather troublesome; she did not quite approve her being so attractive as to fascinate first Mr. Mowbray, and then the illustrious young Gutch. Miss Pinnock was not a dry bloodless old maid, with all her learning; and, though she had fulfilled her young ambition, and reformed the institution which she ruled, there were moments when she found life a little slow. True that all the opulent elderly gentlemen connected with the establishment admired her greatly . . . she might have married any bachelor or widower of them all. But

an elderly gentleman, however opulent, is not the fair ideal of most young women, and Miss Pinnock was still young. So, to say truth, she rather inclined to envy Amy her wanderings in a wider world. However, on this occasion she told Miss Gray that she had done rightly: and, as it happened that one of the assistant teachers was ill, Amy was set to work until another situation could be found for her.

This was not long, and Amy was glad thereof. After liberty and independence, the inexorable regularity of the institution was very trying. Miss Pinnock kept everybody in rigorous order; her laws were made to be kept; unpunctuality was a thing unknown beneath her rule. Besides, our Amy had wandered at will among the leafy woods of Lindesay—had explored all the most beautiful suburbs of London: so she fretted rather within these high brick walls,

and found the work she had to do intolerably monotonous. And in the evenings, when she would have liked to read or to dream, Miss Pinnock insisted on teaching her algebra.

The first situation which offered was, as we have seen, that of companion to a lady. Miss Griffin of Wyvern Court had been recommended to apply to Miss Pinnock for a suitable person, and did so in a brief quaint letter, written in a clear curious hand, such as College Dons with a propensity to Greek and Arabic are in the habit of writing. Her companion, she said, must be young, pretty, well-mannered, not too big (as she was little herself), able to write clearly, spell correctly, and read English intelligently. If she could play chess, it would be an advantage: at any rate, she must be willing to learn that, or any other game Miss Griffin wished to teach her. Above all, she must not be afraid of dogs.

Miss Pinnock and Amy agreed that this was a promising engagement: so our little heroine was started on her third adventure —this time from Paddington station. Wyvern Grange lay a dozen miles from the railway, in the wildest loneliest part of the Berkshire chalk range, where the Romans made the Icknield Street. Strange antiquities, some almost primæval, lie strewn about that wild region of the royal county. There is the Blowing Stone at Kingston Lisle, which local tradition calls King Alfred's bugle-horn. This curious wind instrument is worth a pilgrimage. It is a rough amorphous block of stone, about three feet high, full of holes, and stands beneath an elm: blow into one of these holes, and there results a sound like the bellowing of a mighty bull, audible many miles away. The origin hereof has never been explained. Older and even stranger is the cave of Wayland

Smith, the invisible worker in iron whom Sir Walter Scott has, by an amazing anachronism, introduced in *Kenilworth*. Three great stones with a fourth laid upon them are the vestiges of the forge of Wayland or Völund, the Scandinavian Vulcan. Völund forged for Siegfried (the Achilles of the *Nibelüngen Lied*) the marvellous sword Balmung. Before it reached the hero, Völund tried it on a rival craftsman, who rashly disputed his superiority—he clove him through helm and coat of mail to the waist, but so fine was the edge that the luckless smith knew nothing of it till he rose from his seat—when at once he fell asunder. How, I should like to know, and when did this dædal Völund become a dweller amid the chalk downs of Berkshire? Did his forge really flame here in the days of that mysterious race who dwelt in our island long before any of the peoples known to

history—a race of great builders, the skeletons of whose palaces and temples will outlast as ruins all the cathedrals and castles and gaols and railway stations of modern times? Stonehenge, I take it, was a glorious edifice, ceiled with gold and floored with cedar and lighted for festival with a myriad cressets, in days before the Aryans had begun to leave the Asian cradle of the races now dominant in Europe. Its ruins will be much what they now are when not a brick is left to mark the site of London. When a mighty monarch held his court on Salisbury Plain, was his chief armourer forging swords in Berkshire?

Amy Gray found Wyvern Grange a strange old place, surrounded by a moat, and built in an unusual style. Its date was of the time when there was some need of fortification. The bridge over the moat had been once a drawbridge, but for years unnum-

bered had remained immoveable. The moat itself was picturesquely stagnant—large white water-lilies slept on the surface—lazy carp of vast dimension (fed regularly twice a day) dwelt in the water—and even the rats were so well fed and unmolested that the Pied Piper of Hamelin would not have tempted them to follow him.

The house itself, built partly of brick and partly of flint, with the oddest of gables and niches and gurgoyles, stood amidst a wilderness of gardens and lawns. Very odd and old-fangled were those orchard-gardens, where ancient apple-trees stood amid beds of fragrant herbs forgotten in Covent Garden, and where mulberry-trees, broken down by the fruity weight of immemorial autumns, rested their large limbs upon the lush grass. There were fish ponds in these old grounds—and sundials placed wherever

sunbeams could reach them; and if the ghost of John Evelyn had suddenly walked out upon the grass, you would hardly have felt surprise.

The interior of Wyvern Grange was at least as curious as the exterior. Its early occupants had evidently belonged to a persecuted minority, religious or political: there were hidden rooms, unsuspected closets, double staircases, doors behind pictures, and all sorts of quaint concealments. Age had made the old place even quainter than it otherwise would have been; had altered the levels of the floors, and drawn the walls away from the perpendicular, and warped casement and ceiling. There were very few right angles about Wyvern Grange. It gave Amy Gray the impression of being a very tumbledown château indeed; but there are two or three old houses in the county, Windsor Castle to wit, and Bisham Abbey,

which are likely to last—and so, I think, will Wyvern Grange.

The mistress of this odd mansion was in every way worthy of it. The weather was somewhat sultry when Amy Gray arrived; yet she found Miss Griffin close to a mighty wood fire, and half buried in an immense leather chair. Miss Griffin looked—without a question—just like a witch. She was a very little old woman, with very bright eyes under bushy grey eyebrows, and enveloped in a very red mantle. On a tiger-skin rug before the fireplace lay several dogs of different sizes, that might have been taken for her familiars, and on a reading-stand close to her was a large volume, an ancient folio with leathern binding and brazen clasps, which she was reading studiously when Amy was anounced.

All the dogs sprang up at once: one of them, a cantankerous bull-terrier, showed

his fangs and snarled. Then they all came and sniffed round Amy's legs; and, as there were among them one or two big enough to eat her, it was a trying moment. She bore the ordeal like a heroine—like my heroine, in fact. The dogs were satisfied: a big mastiff shoved his black muzzle in friendly fashion into her little hand; a blue Skye-terrier lay on his back at her feet, and rolled with his legs in the air, and made certain remarks which were almost articulate.

Miss Griffin meanwhile had been regarding Amy with those eyes whose diamond brightness time had not deadened. She was evidently satisfied with her inspection. She rose from her chair—and Miss Gray thereupon perceived that her new mistress was considerably smaller than herself. If there are witches in Lilliput, Miss Griffin belonged to the guild. She extended her hand to Amy, and said, in a very high voice,

"I am glad to see you, Miss Gray. My dogs are also glad to see you."

The biggest of the troop thereupon stretched himself, and emitted a mighty sound; and several of the others made remarks which were clearly quite intelligible to Miss Griffin. She patted one, and touched another with her foot, and said to Amy,

"You see, I am very fond of dogs, Miss Gray. I prefer them to human beings. You can trust them."

Such was Amy Gray's first introduction to Wyvern Grange and its owner. Quaint and peculiar as they both were, she soon found herself very much at home. Miss Griffin did not demand much from her. The old lady never left her room till nearly noon, being served with breakfast in bed. When she came down, if the day were fine, she walked up and down a terrace on the south side of the house, followed by all her dogs. Then

she expected Amy's attendance, and would gossip with her about the social events of days long past. Miss Griffin had store of curious anecdote, and liked a good listener. At about two o'clock the morning paper reached the Grange; then the old lady would lie back in her huge chair, and sip a cup of strong Mocha, with some unnamed liqueur in it, and it was Amy's task to read to her. Not at first an easy task. Miss Griffin would not be bored with leading articles, or eloquent speeches, or prolix reports; but if there were anything odd in Divorce or Police Courts, anything singularly absurd or original said in either House, any special eccentricity in the agony column, *that* she expected to hear. Amy, not being afflicted with crassitude, soon did her work admirably; learnt to skim the cream of the journal, rejecting all the matter which is so vastly important, and so intolerably weari-

some. Miss Griffin was quite delighted with her new companion's achievement in this direction.

When the paper was squeezed dry, the old lady usually settled down to take a nap —and Amy was free till dinner at five. She soon acquired the habit of wandering about the old-fashioned grounds at this time: there were generally half a dozen dogs delighted to accompany her. She discovered an antique seat under a vast welshnut tree by one of the ponds; here she gave herself up to day-dreams, while the dogs paddled in the water, occasionally giving chase to a rat or a rabbit. At five, dinner—an elegant refection, suited to two maiden ladies diverse in age; served with such plate and porcelain and glass as Miss Gray had never seen on the table of Mowbray the millionaire. Everything was delicate, fantastic, antiquate. Benvenuto Cellini's hand was seen in the

gold and silver, and none but the great Venetian masters could have blown and coloured those miraculous flasks and goblets. Miss Griffin's wines were worthy of the crystal that held them; her special liking was for an old Madeira, the very essence of the grape.

The evenings at Wyvern Grange were either light or serious. The mistress of the establishment had two hobbies; one was chess, so her holiday evenings were given to that glorious game. Miss Gray could play chess. She had played indeed with Terrell, at Mowbray Mansion—the Bohemian barrister, to whom chess was child's play, and who had fought blindfold against eight antagonists at once, commended Amy's style, taught her the Mortimer attack in the Evans Gambit, and opened her mind in reference to the Muzio. So Miss Gray was really rather a nice little player for a girl—

but she found herself in an ignominious position when she sat down opposite to Miss Griffin—before a large marble chess-table, whereon the red and white battalions of carved ivory looked formidable. The old lady, with a small dainty hand which must have been kissable in its plump rose-flusht youth, but which had come to resemble a white ivory claw, marshalled her squadrons with a foresight and decision that were too much for Amy Gray. She fought hard, but it was vain: I regret to say that the only way to get a tolerable game was for Miss Griffin to give her a rook.

The serious evenings were harder to endure. Miss Griffin's second hobby was the study of casuistry. This science has rather fallen into desuetude since chymistry came in —perhaps because opium and hydrate of chloral are excellent antidotes for the pangs of an uneasy conscience. As the poet remarks:

There really is nothing absurder
On this poor terrestrial ball
Than after committing a murder
To let it annoy you at all:
In visions fantastic and floral
You may wander like innocent lambs
If you only take hydrate of chloral
At bedtime . . . two drachms.

This was the sort of problem which Miss Griffin loved. A. has committed a murder, and it makes him restless at night. Is he justified in taking a narcotic to avoid disturbing his wife, supposing that she has not profited by the murder? Is he justified if she has so profited? If he should talk in his sleep, and reveal the murder to his wife, ought Mrs. A. to denounce him to the police? Such a problem has innumerable corollaries.

Big volumes on casuistry had Miss Griffin collected; and their margins she had carefully annotated with her own notions on the matter. She wanted Amy Gray's aid to pursue her favourite study; to read to her

the long circuitous arguments of subtle casuists; to make marginal entries in her beloved folios. Amy found it rather dreary work. These strange insoluble problems of life haunted her; she could not help putting herself in the place of these people who had got into inextricable difficulties, and *must* do wrong whatever choice they might make. She found herself applying Miss Griffin's subtleties to her own case, and persuading herself that she ought to have married Edward Mowbray. She did her duty much to Miss Griffin's contentment, reading intelligently and intelligibly, and copying the old lady's marginalia in the neatest of ladylike hands. But the fumes of the casuist's alembics and crucibles had an unhealthy effect upon her brain.

It has recently been stated that the late Mr. Keble was much consulted on questions of casuistry, and that his replies to some of

his clients will be published. An instructive book, no doubt. I wonder whether his opinion was asked by any of those incomprehensible folk who send conscience-money to the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Their position seems to me to involve a complete dilemma. If they owe these sums, why don't they pay them to the collectors? If they don't owe them, why pay them at all? And how are we to know that they don't owe a great deal more? If I were Chancellor of the Exchequer (an appointment which I by no means covet) I would set the ablest of the detective police on the track of these remitters of irregular sums—and when I found them, would scrutinize their accounts with savage severity. Depend on it, there's something questionable about these gentry: if an expert investigater could overhaul their ledgers and cashbooks, the result would in my opinion be advantageous to the public.

But I must return to Amy Gray. Whether her evenings were devoted to chess or to casuistry, they were not prolonged to a very wearisome extent. Miss Griffin liked to go to bed soon after ten. Thereafter, Amy was free, and was wont to retreat to her own room, and enjoy a little rest. Her waking dreams were chiefly, I fancy, of Lord Waynflete: but the visions of night were a curious mixture of Edward Mowbray and Grosvenor Gutch, of Allgaier Gambits and inextricably difficult cases of conscience. She would find herself suddenly checkmated by Miss Griffin, whose queen would be metamorphosed into Clara Gutch in red ivory: or Jack Johnson and young Gutch would face one another on the board, in the form of hostile rooks; or she would believe herself to have committed some dark crime, from whose consequences she could only escape by marrying Mr. Mowbray. The

fact was that the child's brain was at this time subjected to too strict a tension. She had not, you see, the fine strong intellect which Mrs. Fawcett considers the endowment of the majority of women.

Miss Gray's room was long and somewhat narrow; oak panelled throughout; with casements diamond-paned. These looked out over lawn and garden and moat toward a wide stretch of undulating chalk-down, whose vast soft curves seemed to suggest the contour of the primeval goddess Hertha. The aspect was western: when the rosy sunset flushed that swelling ridge, it imparted a strange loveliness. The lonely beauty of those wide downs, uninterrupted by any trees, has a curious charm; and the wanderer who at eventide comes suddenly upon one of those antique ruins of a forgotten race which stand amid those solitudes will experience a sensation of awe and of de-

light. As Amy stood before the quaint oval mirror, set in a rim of silver, which stood upon her toilet-table, she often raised her eye from her own similitude, and looked out upon the soft green hills with a vague wish that she could traverse them, and see the world beyond.

For she was lonely . . . lonely. Chess and casuistry may be fit food for ancient maiden ladies, whose brains have been sharpened by time, while their cheeks and hands have hardened to the consistence of ivory. Plump little birds like our Amy want more appetising and stimulating nutriment. Lesbia's sparrow liked to take ripe grapes from its mistress's fingers, to taste the moisture of her dainty lips. Amy, we know, had sipped a certain ebrious lymph whereof those who once drink can never be satiated. Shakespeare has told us that Kit Marlowe spake the truth:

> Sweet shepherd, now I know thy saw of might—
> He never loved who loved not at first sight.

Amy Gray was a living proof hereof; she had been a changed creature since the day when she and Lord Waynflete first met. She hardly knew what it meant; she sorely blamed herself, though in Love's Court she would be held blameless; and now, in the leisure times afforded by her engagement, she tortured herself with doubts and perplexities.

Over the mantelpiece in her chamber hung a charming portrait of a girl about her own age—painted how long ago! None but the "dear knight of Plympton" could have drawn those bewitching lineaments. The blue eyes, moist with a tear of rapture; the ravishing sweet mouth; the soft curve of the breasts; the divine grace of the attitude—all were miraculous. Masses of chestnut hair glorified the wide white brow; a

grey riding-habit showed the perfect form; one delicate lithe hand, ungloved, lay listless on the lap. Amy looked at the portrait very often and very long—marvelling what had been this fair being's fate. Were they sisters in sorrow? For Amy, though she knew it to be wrong, could not help being sorrowful. Hard she tried to guess, from the exquisite expression of the portrait, what had chanced to its original; and it made her profoundly melancholy to think that, whatever her life had been, she must have been sleeping beneath the green turf long before our Amy had beheld the light of the sun. The mighty painter had immortalized the rose in her bosom, which had faded the very day it was placed on the canvas: how trifling now seemed the difference between the life of the rose and the life of the lovely girl who wore it!

In the early morning Amy Gray was com-

monly in blither mood. A blue Skye tertier, that had taken a great fancy to her on her first arrival, was wont to sleep at her chamber door. Soon after sunrise this little rascal would grow restless, and scratch until Amy let him in; and, if the weather were fine, and the little girl in a humour to walk, he ran barking joyously into the grounds, and showing his enjoyment by innumerable antics. Out across the moat she liked to ramble, and to climb the steep side of the down—where she could pick hundreds of fresh-grown mushrooms, white as her own fair fingers. At this hour she forgot casuistry and chess, and, breathing the fresh air of the hills, persuaded herself that some day or other she should again see Lord Waynflete. So she would take a long ramble over the dewy downs—and run races with Fido, who was always ready for a lark—and get into such high spirits that she wondered

at her own more melancholy moods. What a difference between night and day—between the solitary chamber, with its quaint furniture and its single strange portrait, and the open breeze of hills that seemed to laugh in the morning sunshine!

And then she would hasten home to breakfast with a little basket of mushrooms that had sprung up since last her fairy feet went that way. This child had been cloistered in an orphan school till of late—many discoveries had she made since her escape, but of mushrooms she knew nothing until she reached Wyvern Grange. Doubtless she had eaten them—and many other things unknown to her—at Mr. Mowbray's table; but she had never seen them growing, never been aware of the mysterious way in which they spring from earth. Why, it was like magic to her; and the snow-white fungi seemed a fairy creation day after day. And

then she discovered that they were good to eat; much nicer indeed eaten fresh upon the downs than disguised in some scientific sauce. For the mushroom is like the oyster —delicious every way, it is most delicious in its native simplicity. What says a quaint old epigram?

My love in her attire doth show her wit,
It doth so well become her;
For every season she hath dressings fit,
For winter, spring, and summer.
No beauty she doth miss
When all her robes are on:
But Beauty's self she is
When all her robes are gone.

With a difference, this might be said of the mushroom and the oyster—excellent are they howsoever dressed, but they reach perfection when not dressed at all.

Amy, having at this time more leisure than when she was at Harrow—or even than at Prince's Gate, for her time there seemed always occupied—renewed her

studies and her correspondence. But she was startled to find that, of the half dozen young ladies whose most intimate friend she had been, every one had set up a still more intimate friend—not of her own sex. You see, most of Amy's schoolfellows were just ripe for falling in love; and, not having made acquaintance with male humanity till they entered the world, were just as ready as Miranda was to exclaim of the first tolerably good-looking fellow they met—

> I might call him
> A thing divine, for nothing natural
> I ever saw so noble.

Amy, as she got letter after letter from her old comrades, would certainly have thought that the world was peopled with the goodliest men, but having had an experience of her own, she rather pitied her friends . . . they had not seen Lord Waynflete.

And then came the reflexion, should she ever see him again? This thought perpetu-

ally recurred to trouble her. Here was Lucy engaged to a curate, and Emily to an officer, and Sarah to a wholesale ironmonger —the *wholesale* was strongly italicized—but Miss Gray (proud little Miss) did not think she *could* marry an ironmonger. Still, there was the fact—these young ladies had all got declared lovers—tangible entities, whom they might regard as so much solid property. Hence, having begun by pitying them, Amy generally ended with envying them. However, she wrote charming little replies, a nice mixture of gratulation and chaff. Lucy had been rather a free-thinker at school, and had actually questioned the necessity of learning the *Church Catechism*; of course Miss Gray reminded her of her naughtiness, and asked her how she would like teaching her husband's small parishioners their duty to their neighbour. Emily received a fancy picture of her hero in his regimentals—for

Amy had a knack at caricature, which had brought her into occasional trouble in her schooldays. Sarah, who set up for an aristocrat, her mother's second cousin having married the youngest son of an Irish peer, was of course asked how she could deign to sully her scutcheon by marrying a dealer in pots and pans. Her other correspondents fared no better. I fear Miss Gray was rendered caustic and cynical by her casuistry and chess, her uncertainty and solitude; there was a subacid flavour in these little letters of hers, which rather puzzled her friends—who, to tell the truth, were young persons of a common-place type, no one of whom I should choose for a heroine.

Amy did not write in the same vein to Miss Pinnock—that able and stately person was held in considerable awe by her pupils—by those even who had gone out into the world and become matrons. She was not slow to

scold them for any flippancy or frivolity of style; wherefore such of them as continued to correspond with her were careful of their phrases. But, as the schoolmistress had brain enough to see that Amy, with all her simplicity, was not an ordinary little girl, the correspondence between them had unusual freedom and fluency. Miss Pinnock did not lecture very much. Amy did not write as if she were saying a lesson, with her hands behind her back.

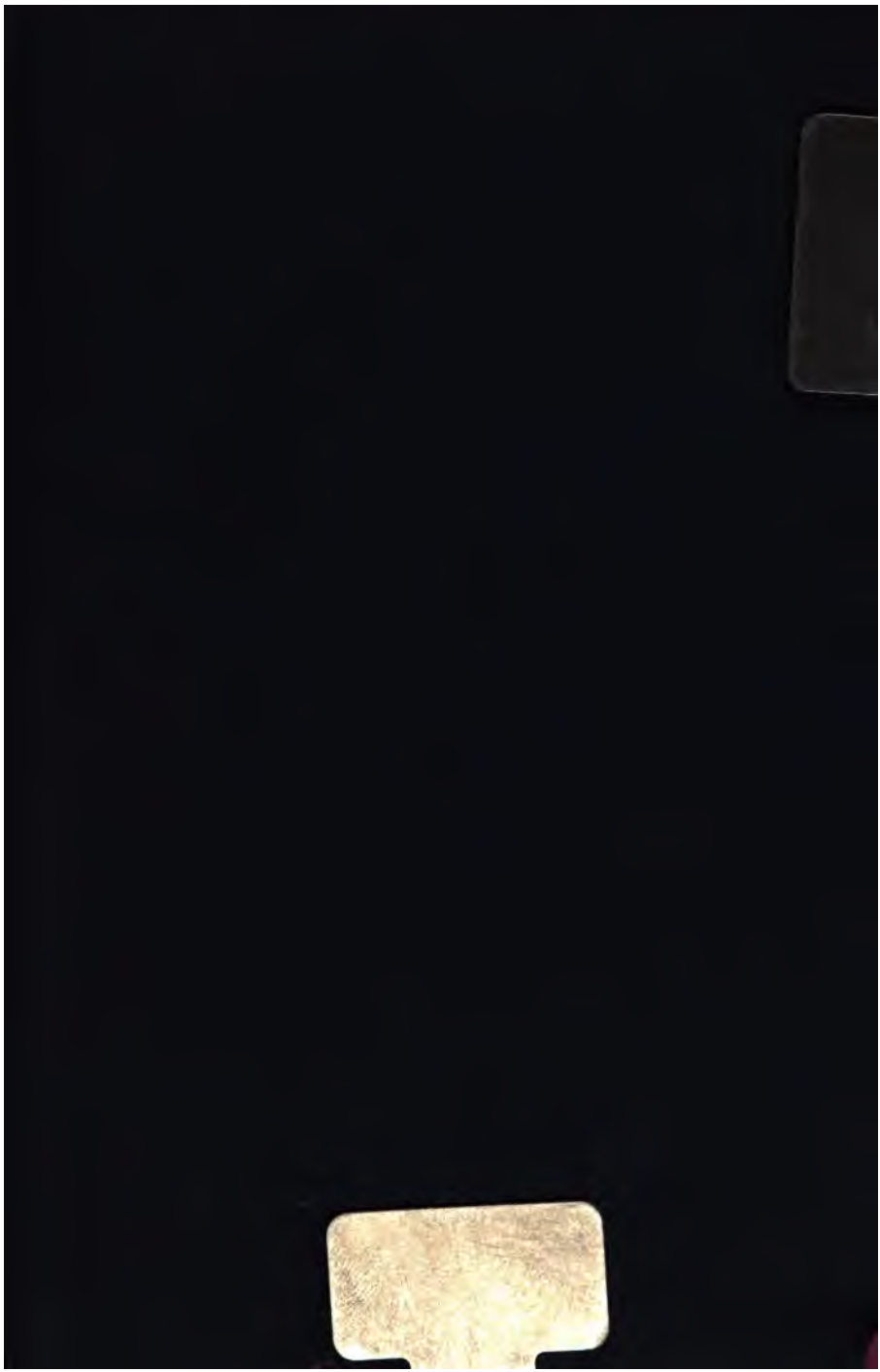
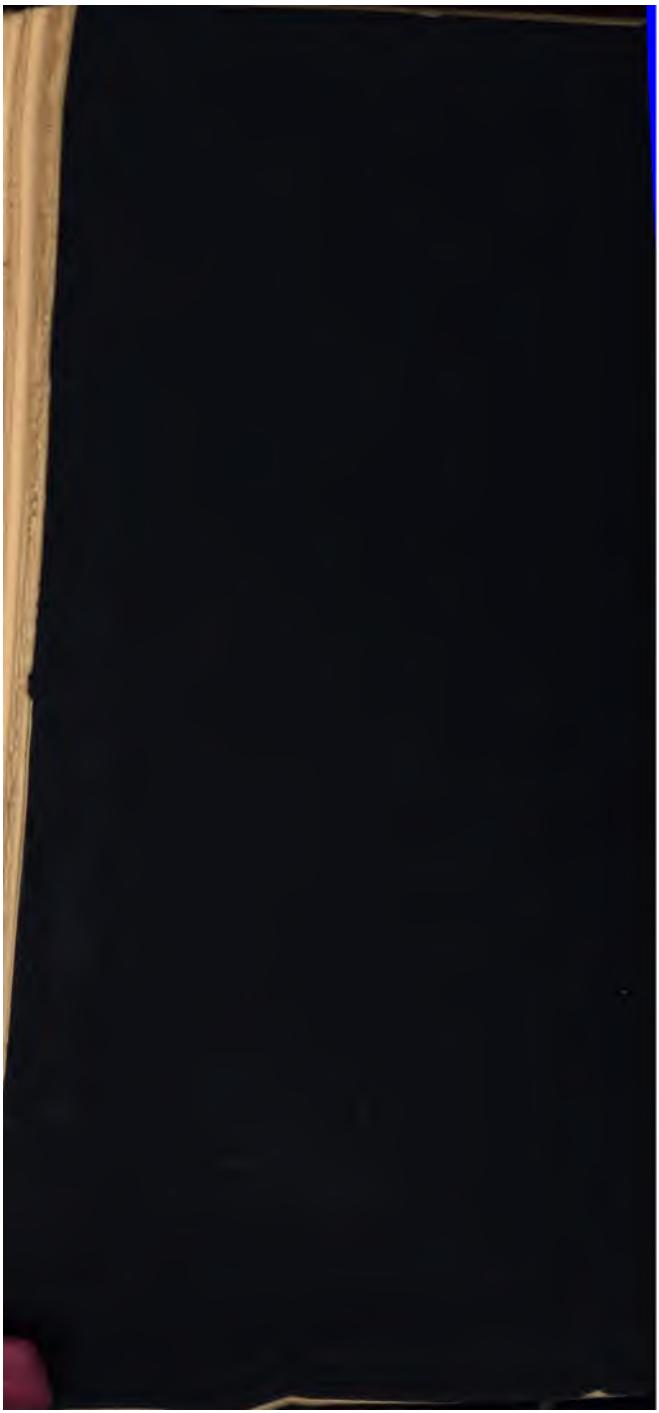
Miss Gray had told her former instructress what intended marriages she had heard of, and what she thought about them. Her letter was playful, and there was not a word of harm in it. Whereupon it was with indignant amazement that one morning she read a reply from Miss Pinnock, written in the very finest Johnsonese, reproving her for the flippant—not to say imper-

tinent—tone of her last communication, and proceeding to criticize her general conduct.

"I greatly regret to say"—wrote Miss Pinnock—"that authentic reports have reached me which indicate that you have been at least imprudent in your intercourse with persons of the opposite sex. It is not requisite to enter into details, as you will with facility comprehend my allusion. Modesty and delicacy are a young lady's truest adornments, and most reliable protectors. You have not yet attained your majority, and I consider myself in a position of parental responsibility towards you. You ought therefore to inform me of any engagement or entanglement which——"

Amy Gray read no farther; with a motion of quick anger she crushed the letter in her tiny hand, and threw it into the fireplace.

What would Miss Angelina Pinnock have said had she been there? What would that dread being have done?

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

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